

CULT  
MOVIES  
NO. 39

# CULT MOVIES

TRACI LORDS

INTERVIEWED

"I DON'T SCREW AROUND"

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VS.  
THE THING!

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"BIGFOOT"  
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# DEEP INSIDE CULT MOVIES

## Traci Lords: "I Don't Screw Around!"

**I**n the summer of 1988, the radio airwaves were alive for a brief, brilliant span, while a movie to be coming soon was being trumpeted as few of its caliber ever are anymore. Roger Corman had backed a re-make of his 1957 sci-fi thriller, *Not Of This Earth*. The original had featured Beverly Garland, while the new version starred young Traci Lords in the same role. The whole point of the movie seems to have been an excuse to taunt the public with that hilarious radio ad. It was a commercial that, for a week or so, would have "the whole town talking." But, of course, they'd been talking already, and were used to it. And that was the point.

The ad spot was a work of genius in its simplicity. The voice of a male announcer, somber and urgent, somewhat of the stature of an Orson Welles, intoned tremulously, "The fate of the world is in the hands of one woman: Traci Lords." That ominous warning was followed immediately by the voice of Ms. Lords herself, forcefully assuring, "I DON'T screw around!"

Setup and punch line. If our future security is in her slippery hands, we might as well throw in the dishrag right now. The absurd payoff WAS a payoff, and nearly trumped Nixon's "I am not a crook!" line, because Traci Lords was already a one-woman joke by 1988. The citizens of Los Angeles were patron saints of her humor and the butt of her wit. My tax dollars were hard at work two years before, when local police and FBI officers conducted an investigation leading to an eventual court trial, stemming from Traci's three year participation in explicit adult entertainment beginning when she was only fifteen years of age. The State of California unwittingly aided Traci in the ensuing kiddie porn scandal by issuing her state identification falsely demonstrating her to be eighteen years of age. Weeks of costly legal debate and positioning revolved around whether or not this solitary, compromising fact would be admissible information in the coming court trial.

The resulting media blitz (the trial was covered on the nightly news with juicy enthusiasm not to be savored again until the OJ Simpson trial some eight years later) would serve as millions of dollars in free advertising for any producer swift enough to cash in. As always, Roger Corman was happy to oblige where money could be made. He became a not-too-silent packager who pulled the deal together; any vintage script of his could be re-used for Traci, if shot for nothing in ten days. Director Jim Wynorski took the challenge

to make the movie right this minute, and the resulting "Naughty Of This Earth" was what blazed across the screen — for about a minute.

By the film's premiere, the public had almost two years to forget the lurid details of the convoluted Lords case, but they would remember Traci herself. Would a mainstream-seeming film with Traci, once the bread and butter of an entire industry, catch a few remaining crumbs at the box-office?

She'd seeded ardor among the foulest chicken-hawks and feathered her nest



CULT MOVIES

while showing her heavenly body, demonstrating the big bang theory to amateur astronomers throughout the cosmos. Did enough stargazers dwell out there in the big dipper to make another unveiling of her constellations profitable at the neighborhood observatory?

In Hollywood, *Not Of This Earth* played at the Vine Theater for HALF a week. The producers of the film rented the house from Pacific Theaters for three days so they could have some kind of Los Angeles premiere, and ANY kind of newspaper reviews to prove it. About one hundred space cadets gave in to temptation and bought one-way tickets to the Friday Night blast-off. The film was then quickly sold to home video, and Roger Corman bought a new Jaguar.

As a sidelight, I could mention that I was among the one hundred curiosity seekers and drama lovers who attended that Friday showing. One of the friends in my group was adult film actor Blake Palmer, who'd been featured in hundreds of explicit adult films and videos before 1988. Maybe forty or so people — meaning not quite half the patrons who'd bought tickets — recognized Blake from his films. These guys and gals stopped to talk, others just waved or made some sign that they knew who he was. Only one gentleman angered Blake by mistaking him for Ron Jeremy.

The point in mentioning any of this is that, if anyone felt Traci Lords had at that time made a career change, they somewhat pardonably jumped the gun. Her audience here was composed very much of X-rated fans, curious to see if she could act. A cheapjack sci-fi farce, where the only expense is the ad campaign, does not spell

breakthrough or acceptance in a new genre.

Indeed, this had all the earmarks of a swan song, a desperate last chance to cash in by all concerned. There were still producers, directors, distributors, and (alleged) gangsters who'd narrowly escaped prison time owing to their illegal involvement with the peachfuzzed little Lolita, and most of them still thought of her as the Twist of This Earth. Someone floated rumors that these (alleged) directors, gangsters, and so forth might even actually want to see Traci DEAD!

But somehow the trick worked. Enough people got the joke. And the tide did begin to turn. After a half-week debut at a neighborhood theater, who would imagine that any of this could have paved the way to a brilliant career for Ms. Lords, that the lady would still be in the acting game fifteen years later, and that anyone could possibly care? But that is what's going on, and I think that the quirky, quickie *Not Of This Earth* movie is responsible for changing cinema history. Lords is one of the VERY few crossover actresses — perhaps the only one — to have had such high prominence in the two distinct film worlds.

Adding to her prestige, last month Traci's autobiography, *Underneath It All*, was published. As we go to press, it is among the top ten selling books in America. Unfortunately, she doesn't have many happy memories about *Not Of This Earth*, even mentioning that its relative failure at the box-office put her into momentary depression. But then, I don't think the film was

meant to be a huge theatrical hit, and it has gone on to relative success on late night TV and home video sales. In a recent TV interview with Craig Kilborn, Traci declined to even mention this movie, or Wynorski or Corman. She chose to thank the groovier-seeming John Waters (who DOES subscribe to *Cult Movies Magazine*) for helping her make the switch out of X and into cool (with Johnny Depp, in *Cry Baby*).

"They laughed when I sat down to play." But she's still playing, had successful careers in acting, music, and now writing. As a raconteur of her own tale, Traci is an authentic super hero, one of the great wonders of the many globes. How else can vital and true realities which are never told the same way twice, undulate their subatomic structures in ways so as to become predictable in every dimension? Sci-fi fans will appreciate that show and tell time with Traci is life in an eternally alternate universe. Less than satisfactory memories are morphed, re-programmed, and time-warped to become more agreeable with each elongated re-telling. Each freshly crystallized thought-form evolves into a new conception of the heart broken past.

For the time being, these will be the dimensions which lay and lie Underneath It All. That fact alone may make it the #1 read in the galaxy today.

Dream on!

- Michael Copner  
Editor

Traci & Co in John Waters' *Cry Baby*.  
From left: Kim McGuire, Darren E Burrows, Johnny Depp, Ricki Lake & Lords



# WE'VE GOT MAIL!

Concerning William Greer's question about Leigh Brackett ("We Got Mail," *CM* #38), she did indeed write several screenplays that John Wayne acted in. Notable among them *Rio Bravo* and *Hasari!* Brackett also worked on the screenplay for *The Big Sleep* (1946) along with William Faulkner and Jules Furthman. And the same year, she wrote the screenplay for a William Castle mystery, *Crime Doctor's Man Hunt*.

Also, after reading Brad Linaweaver's "Frankenstein meets the Overman" I decided that I had better add a couple more Hammer films to my video collection.

Chris Schaefer  
Long Beach, CA

Shortly after the death of Mabel Longdon, you referred to her (in *CM* #34) as "the last of the silent comedy widows." I assumed that this was correct, for surely there could not be any more left. But a recent obit in the *Los Angeles Times* informed us that Addie McPhail, the widow of Fatty Arbuckle, passed away on 4/14/03, at age 97. Could this possibly become a situation similar to those "last" non-surrendering Japanese soldiers from WW2 who kept showing up in obscure Pacific jungles during the 1970s? (After the "last" one showed up, there were two more.)

Brad Linaweaver's article on Peter Cushing's portrayals of Baron Frankenstein is undoubtedly the best thing ever written on the subject.

As for Joe Wawrzyniak's definitive analysis of the films of O.J. Simpson, well, let's just say it was morbidly fascinating. I recommend doing a similar piece on the films of Robert Blake (including, obviously, *In Cold Blood*), but only after his trial is over. It should take only another two or three years.

Marc Russell  
Los Angeles, CA

I happen to agree with the editorial view of Michael Copner that, out of our first century of films, *Citizen Kane* and *The Raven* are the two greatest. They contain many similarities I hope you'll touch on in your upcoming filmbook. And, yes, I'll begrudgingly admit that Bill Allen's *Raven/Kane* cartoons are symptoms of a primitive genius. I laughed.

Here's a yin-yang synchronicity hind-

ing these two films. *Citizen Kane* was virtually a banned film BEFORE it was released. Often it had to be "advertised" in Hearst newspapers under the anonymous title of "Big Screen Show." *The Raven* met with no such initial resistance, but the showing of it was the "last straw" which CREATED the horror film ban in England. These films and events were ill-fated, life changing catastrophes for Lugosi and Welles. The penalty for excellence in art.

Gene Walters  
Akron, OH



Your article on John Hart has forced me to apologize to my Uncle Frank. For years he's been telling us that he met Lon Chaney Jr. up here at a Junior A hockey game back in the 1950s. He knows I'm a big Chaney fan but couldn't provide me with much detail, so I figured he was in error. All he could remember was that Lon had so much booze on his breath that if someone had lit a match the Master Character Creator would have been playing a new role as The Human Blowtorch. My apologies Uncle, you were telling the truth all along. I simply wish you'd have gotten Lon's autograph.

John Hart mentions in his interview doing some filming near a river with a bend in it. This was the Don River he refers to, which is now a real cess pool that cuts through the middle of Toronto. I fondly remember watching Hawkeye as a kid, and I have some of the episodes on video. Hart is correct when he states they were great little shows. Some young Canadian talent appeared in some of the episodes, such as John Vernon and Larry Mann.

Here's a film tidbit: In Alister Sim's version of *A Christmas Carol*, near the end as he's jumping around happy to be alive, he stands in front of a mirror next to a window.

If you look carefully in the mirror you can see the director sitting in a chair watching the proceedings. My friend Doug Smart pointed that out to me.

John Soister and Joe Wawrzyniak are two of the greatest film critics currently in print. Keep them busy!

George A. Humenik  
Toronto, Canada

Many thanks to Gino Colbert for his memoirs on working with Doris Wishman during her later years in New York. As Doris' longtime friend and biographer, I am grateful that Mr. Colbert has set these memories down for posterity.

Those who know Doris recognize that she was a devoted filmmaker, tenacious to the end, with a tremendous ability to infect people with the desire to make movies. If she didn't always have the resources to manage her productions as well as possible, she compensated for it through her endless devotion to filmmaking, a passion which often returned very little economic recompense for anyone involved in her projects - Doris included. In an industry typified by the hustle for a buck, it is gratifying to have known someone for whom filmmaking was still largely a form of play.

Michael Bowen  
New York City

I loved that article Gino Colbert wrote on Doris Wishman. Somewhere sometime way back then, I know that I met Doris, but it's not clear why, when or how. I wonder if it could have been with Al Goldstein? God Bless Gino, he did a wonderful job of bringing the old girl to life. I was actually moved at the end, as he recounted her passing. He could've written that as quite angry and bitter - she ripped him off! - but the whole thing's written with love.

Brenda Owens  
Portland, OR

I've been reading your mag since Issue 8 and it never fails to impress me with the quality of its journalism, but for some reason your excellent level of service seems to fall apart whenever you venture into James Bond territory. Timothy M. Walters has already pointed out Joe Wawrzyniak's error in Issue 37 ("James Bond and the Actress Curse") of crediting Honor Blackman with the role of Emma Peel. But what he fails to add is that a "Bond curse" - which is otherwise quite a neat idea - is patently absurd when applied to Ms. Blackman, who for the past forty years has been one of the busiest, most high profile actresses in Britain.

The *Avengers* made Blackman a household name, and if her career "petered out" in the 1970s it may have been because she was

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approaching fifty, never a good age for an actress to find meaty roles. However she enjoyed a massive resurgence in the 1990s thanks to *The Upper Hand*, an anglicised version of *Who's the Boss?* in which she played the Katherine Helmond role. This is the fourth longest continuously running sitcom in British TV history – 95 episodes over seven years. Now 75, Blackman still looks fabulous, and still works constantly on stage and TV. As for her film career, there was a small movie called *Bridget Jones's Diary*...

It is indeed curious how some actresses seem to have disappeared completely since their *Black Roles*, but the suggestion that Honor Blackman's career has been anything except a string of acclaimed successes doesn't hold water at all.

Unfortunately, Issue 38 has another Bond-related howler with Mike Malloy's claim that "an out-and-out Briton didn't play 007 until Roger Moore." Kudos to Malloy for using "Briton" instead of the awful "Brit," but a "Briton" is anyone from Great Britain and the term therefore applies as much to Scotsman Connery as to Englishman Moore – and indeed to Welshman Dalton. (Anyway, trivia buffs know that the first Briton to play Bond was Bob Holness – later a well-known TV quizmaster – in a 1957 radio production of *Moonraker*.)

*Cult Movies* has always been hard to find in Britain but you do have British readers. Maybe you just need a few more British writers.

**MJ Simpson**  
**U.K.**

I will never purchase another copy of *Cult Movies* again, and I want you to know why. Joe Wawrzyniak's article in Issue #38, which purported to be about the movies of O.J. Simpson, was far too often just a forum for the author to vent his racist beliefs and to display his misunderstanding of race relations in contemporary America. I do not buy magazines like *Cult Movies* to expose myself to the venom of hateful and uncaring attitudes as epitomized by closed-minded know-nothings like Rush Limbaugh. Rather, I buy magazines like *Cult Movies* to escape the increasingly shrill whining of cry-baby right-wingers, for whom basic tolerance and respect for their fellow human beings seems to be an obscenity. Unfortunately, with their current control of the media, their opinions are spread far and wide, and not even *Cult Movies* is immune to their poison. It's a situation that's oppressive to those of us still capable of recognizing things for what they are, but no doubt it's a situation that brings great joy to people like Wawrzyniak.

**Mark Williams**  
**Columbus, OH**

[Editor's Note: Thoreau remarked that, "Nothing, no matter how great, is ever as great as its fame." Or something to that effect. Point being that Joe's gentle article is tremendously overshadowed by its evil reputation, which began the day that issue hit the newsstands. Joe himself does not seem to me to be a racist, a sexist, a Satanist, a Nazi, or a fan of Rush Limbaugh. By the way, Limbaugh would never stoop so high as to infiltrate our magazine. We received bags of mail concerning the OJ Simpson article, representing every point of view under the sun. I still haven't heard from OJ himself, yet. I wonder if he's seen it and approves?]

All I can say is that Mark didn't get the joke. Up until the final paragraph, the article was something in the nature of a joke, albeit a deadly serious one, after the fashion of all supreme humor. Following is a slightly different reaction, as it appeared online by *USA Today* front-page editor David Colton.

*Cult Movies* occupies a singular place in the genre magazine scheme of things. Based not-so-securely in Hollywood, the mag began as a tribute to Bela Lugosi, and has never abandoned its classic horror roots even as it wandered into '70s esoterica, grind house winks, and libertarian polemics.

The new issue includes an earnest and astonishingly detailed look at films from India. The magazine's rat-a-tat look is part of its charm. Nothing is a throwaway; most articles make news, or break new points of view. The covers always are tabloid urgent.

Along the way the rough and ready *Cult Movies* has published some of fandom's most important recent works: Gordon Shriver's monumental bio on Karloff's later years appeared here. As did the tragic final years of Barbara Payton, and strong pieces by Tom Weaver, Gary Don Rhodes and Brnd Linaweaver. Aging starlets who say they have been oiled by Lugosi usually reveal it first in *Cult Movies*.

But even those accustomed to *Cult Movies'* unpredictability were taken, shaken or even baked by this issue's cover, in glorious black-and-white: "O.J. Simpson's Killer Films: His Movies Will Slay You!" accompanied by a smiling shot of a heroic, middle-American Simpson from *Naked Gun*. The intent is a Photoplay feel, and it succeeds even if some are repelled by the concept.

The article itself, by Joe Wawrzyniak, is eye-opening: Simpson's final fate notwithstanding, he did appear in an amazing number of mainstream hits and drive-in favorites. The piece – sarcastic, sassy and at times shocking in its embrace of Simpson's racial and sexual stereotypes – will play great with many readers. Others, such as myself, may feel discom-

fort. And some will laugh out loud at the kick-through-the-barriers lines such as this, from the section on *The Klansman* (1974):

"Does the vicious sexual assault on the honky babe (played by a pre-Dynasty Linda Evans), in any way represent O.J.'s bestial carnal rage when his lecherous desires are not immediately appeased? Or maybe the white gal's harsh defilement gives the viewer insight into O.J.'s salacious penchant for sweet, juicy, succulent young Caucasian blonde femme meat?"

Yes, of course Wawrzyniak is artfully playing with, and taking to ludicrous extremes all of the absurdist baggage the entire Simpson trial took on – it was, after all, simply a murder case and not an allegory on 400 years of black & white relations. Or was it? But I found the tone and endless use of such snipery off-putting and after a few more films, decidedly unpleasant, even if the barbs are delivered with a smile. This, from the section on *Back To The Beach* (1987):

"And what the hell is O.J. running away from? His evil, darker, more violent side? White oppression? A phony insider rap? A bad agent who made him act in too many lamewad movies? And, most importantly, does Frankie Avalon stepping on O.J.'s hand serve as yet another grim confirmation that the mechanistically wicked 'the Man' has always been figuratively stepping on O.J. and his people?"

Funny, but humm. What's really being said here? The kicker reveals all: "Let's sum this baby up. Did O.J. really kill Nicole Brown Simpson or Ron Goldman? Damned if I, or anyone else, will ever really know. Has The Man always been comin' down hard on O.J. and his people? Well, not much anymore, but it's an ancient chickenshit excuse that'll never go away thanks to affirmative action and multiculturalism."

Strong stuff, and though I totally disagree – Wawrzyniak should take a ride on the Jersey Turnpike sometime and see who's STILL on the side of the road – the article is impossible to ignore, deftly melding politics and criticism in a way that was in my face from opening to end. It's pieces like that, which draw applause or boos but never yawns – that make *Cult Movies* such a strong part of the genre newsstand. It may not be everyone's idea of a perfect horror magazine, but it never fails to get your attention.

**David Colton**

[Editor's Note: Ironic or not, Joe lives in New Jersey, travels the Jersey Turnpike twice a day and sees all too well who's STILL on the side of the road.]

## POST US A LETTER

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## Film, Video, CD Reviews

### Race with the Devil

1975, dir. Jack Starrett. This is a very inspired and briskly effective handy-dandy genre blending combo of your typically creepy devil worshipper fright film pic and a slam-bang exciting Southern-fried downhome car chase/crash action opus.



The story follows two vacationing married couples traveling across Texas in a deluxe, self-contained luxury RV camper who accidentally witness a black-robed Satanist cult in the bloodthirsty act of human sacrifice. The cult, whose members are frightfully legion, immediately realize that their secret ceremony was seen, and pretty soon everything goes to hell. The cult gives hot, tie-squallin', dust kickin', metal-twistin' pursuit in cars and pickup trucks. The couples' dog gets strung up. Rattlesnakes spring forth from the RV's cabinets. And every pay phone in Texas proves to be inoperative.

*Race with the Devil* is directed in customary "no muss, no fuss, no pretense whatsoever" efficient battering-ram style by B-movie ace Jack Starrett (Cleopatra Jones), who took over the movie's direction a few days into shooting after original director Lee Frost got canned by the producers for doing too much in-camera editing and for refusing to overshoot a single scene (Frost still receives a co-screenwriting credit for the tightly constructed script, which he penned with longtime collaborator Wes Bishop). The film works like a charm thanks to breakneck pacing, Leonard Rosenman's pile-driving score, dynamically staged car chases (the final chase especially cooks, with several Satanists hopping onto the speeding RV), and an increasing tense aura of all-pervasive dread and paranoia. Additionally, there's a splendidly black, nihilistic surprise twist ending.

After teaming up in the excellent, unusually sensitive feminist-minded Western *The Hired Hand* and Tom McGunagle's terrifically off-kilter seriocomic delight *92 in the Shade*, Peter Fonda and Warren Oates in their third cinematic pairing have developed a warm, easy, comfortable rapport that translates beautifully well on screen, making the friendship between their characters seem completely credible and engaging. Lara Parker and M.A.S.H.'s Loretta Swit hold their own as the wives. Popping up in nifty bits are veteran character actor R.G. Armstrong (Children of the Corn) as a disbelieving sheriff,

co-writer Bishop as a dipstick deputy, and director Starrett as a gas station attendant. Plus, Paul Partain (the obnoxious fat cripple in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*) appears as part of Fonda's motorcycle crew in an early race-track scene.

Often given extremely negative reviews in film guides, *Race with the Devil* is a good deal better than its undeservedly crappy reputation would suggest.

**-Reviewed by Joe Wawrzyniak**

### Black Samurai

1976, dir. Al Adamson (with Jim Kelly, Bill Roy, Roberto Contreras, Marilyn Joi, Essie Lin Chia, Biff Yeager).

After his girlfriend Toki Konuma (Chia) is kidnapped, super-cool, super-bad suave spy Robert Sand (Kelly) infiltrates Satanic drug lord Janicot's (Roy) dope ring and slave trade to get her back. Sand is an agent of D.R.A.G.O.N. and he teams with overweight, over-white undercover cop Pines (Yeager). Janicot is called "The Warlock" and practices the black arts. Sand has an afro, and kicks a lot of people in the head.

The movie's pace never slackens as, every ten minutes or so, something gets blown up or another bad guy gets his face kicked down his throat. One outstanding scene has Sand flying to Janicot's secret hideout via a 1970s spy jet pack. The flick has everything from a cackling cowboy midget (swinging Tarzan-style through a forest), to Regina Carrol performing a demonic belly dance. Marilyn Joi plays Janicot's lady friend Syne.

Al Adamson, the ultimate equal opportunity exploiter, filled the ranks of Janicot's henchmen with dwarfs and little people.

Breatwood's DVD boasts that their copy is the original full-length feature, but some of the violence and language has been trimmed, and all the nudity has been removed. If you're only familiar with Adamson's horror output, this will surely be a '70s drive-in action movie treat.

**-Reviewed by Robert Freese**

### Garden of the Dead

1972, dir. John Hayes. Jekyll & Naugthy-defaced, formaldehyde-smiffing dead people are the first clue that all's not right with this zombie fest. There isn't even a garden to speak of, only a prison work camp where hard laborers steal away for huffing noxious formaldehyde fumes. But hey, remember when your run-of-the-mill flesh eating ghoul was the result of a voodoo ritual reactivating a recently deceased corpse? Here the dead aren't cursed, they're chemists.

So why are prisoners involved in the manufacturing of embalming fluid? Why do the walking dead need garden tools to beat the hell out of the living? Why does son of Ghoul instruct Fred Olen Ray how to toss a bowling ball into a perfectly classic console television? "Drugs!" might be your best answer. At least, it would explain the short attention span that went into making this 58-minute feature.

**- Reviewed by David T. Lindsay**

### A Star in the Dust

1956, dir. Charles Haas (Universal International) A sign cheerfully greets us, "Welcome to Gunlock." Sam Hall (Richard Boone, looking young and cadaverous) isn't made to feel

welcome, though. The Shakespeare-quoting killer smokes in a cell, waiting to be hanged. The hanging will take place in the town square, so everyone will have a good view. One grump voices his disapproval of newfangled scaffolds: "A tree was good enough for my pappy. I reckon it's good enough for me." A troubadour (Terry Gilkison) is inspired to warble about the killer's plight:

Oh, my name it is Sam Hall, it is Sam Hall.  
Yes my name it is Sam Hall, it is Sam Hall.  
Yes my name it is Sam Hall, and I hate you one and all.  
Yes, I hate you one and all.  
Blast your hide.

Not everyone wants to see Sam Hall dead. In fact, almost on one does. Sheriff John Agar insists it's, "No different from any other day." And he tries to go about his duties. But indignant Gunlockers (such as Three Stooges regular Kenneth MacDonald, and a smirking Clint Eastwood) try to talk him out of banging Boone/Hall. Seems Agar has opened a can of worms. Boone was hired to kill settlers by powerful Leif Erickson and his Cattleman's Association, who plan to rescue Boone. Deputy Paul Fix wants to hasten the execution, but Agar's strictly a by-the-book kind of guy. Meanwhile the local farmers ALSO plan to rescue Boone. Did I mention that Agar is engaged to Erickson's busy sister (Mamie Van Doren)?

Tension builds as the hanging grows near. When a store owner remarks how quiet it is, Agar replies, "Too quiet." Never heard THAT line before, eh? When teacher Robert Osterloh lets his schoolkids out to watch the hanging, Agar gets ticked off and the two have a fight, making a mess of the schoolroom while the kids (and a few adults) watch with excitement. Agar explains, "I'm trying to keep the peace," and fines himself five bucks.

Agar tells flaccid Van Doren about her brother's complicity in multiple murders. She confronts her sibling about this. He is blasé about the matter, and asks the rhetorical question, "We hang rustlers and horse thieves, why shouldn't we shoot them who steal grass?" Erickson then plots to help Boone escape, for he fears what information the killer might share before dying if no one shows up to rescue him. Erickson's ex-girlfriend (Randy Stuart) isn't too sympathetic to Boone, as he once tried to rape her. She agrees to Erickson's rescue plot only to save her husband (Harry Morgan) from being implicated. In the meantime Boone's girlfriend (Coleen Gray) is plotting to steal money and run off to Santa Fe to live happily with her man, after his daring prison escape.

Boone does escape, briefly, but is stopped by elderly janitor/handyman James Gleason, who is immediately promoted to deputy by a grateful Agar. Stuart visits Gray, whom she learns is holding letters which prove Erickson's guilt. Stuart is shocked to realize Erickson was the one who paid for the killings. (She previously thought her husband was the one responsible.) The two women scuffle over the letters, leading to an impromptu, down-and-dirty earfight, complete with shoving, hair-pulling, slapping, clothes ripping, and the brutal moment when Gray grabs a coistrack and almost beins Stuart with it, all to the accompaniment of mild guitar strumming on the soundtrack.

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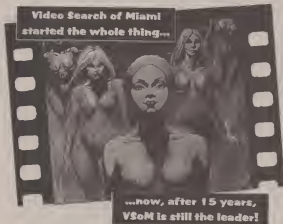
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Agar attempts to force a confession out of Erickson, socking the hell out of him. The cattleman invade town but lose their support of Boone when they realize he duped them by killing men from south of the creek. He was contracted only to kill men from NORTH of the creek. The cattleman stand by peacefully as order is restored and Boone's neck is snapped.

In the Old West, there were indeed instances of cattleman hiring killers to off folks who tried to settle on the prairie, many of them poor immigrants. The character Sam Hall might be inspired by Tom Horn, who was eventually hanged for the killing of a juvenile. Semi-factual films were later made about such paid killings: The Johnson County War on television, and Heaven's Gate on the big screen. Star in the Dust doesn't try for a political slant the way Heaven's Gate does; it's your basic good guys and bad guys stuff, though it's a bit like High Noon in that most of the town is against the sheriff. Agar's sheriff is such a square and a hard ass that he's difficult to root for. He insists on hanging Boone at the appointed time, not a minute sooner or later, though postponing it might buy enough time for Boone to turn evidence against his employers. If not for the convenient letters, the men behind the murders might well have been free to commit MORE evil acts. How much you side with Agar as he manfully struggles to execute his prisoner might also depend on how you feel about capital punishment, but then again, Boone is scuzzy enough that you're not likely to feel much sympathy for him. You know he's bad, since he dresses all in black. He so bad he even robs and beats a rancher who comes to his rescue. Agar, on the other hand, isn't totally business; he finds sympathy for Boone's girlfriend, and notes regretfully that she'll be more lonely than ever once he finishes killing her man. Thoughtful, isn't he?

The title is irrelevant. The star is a sheriff's badge, seen on the ground in the opening credits. This leads us to expect Agar will lose his badge or throw it away, after the fashion of Gary Cooper. This never happens. Perhaps the source novel by Lee Deighton could clarify things.

A major annoyance is Gilson, who seems to improvise a new song every time someone walks by. The worst acting predictably comes from Van Doren. When she confronts her vile brother, she does it with all the half-hearted poutiness of the female lead in a high school play. Paul Fix as the deputy looks eerily like Philip Baker Hall much of the time. The photography by John L. Russel, Jr. of Psycho fame is capable, but only memorable in a few shots (like a high angle view of Agar and Boone through a cracked window). All in all, this is mildly engaging but quickly forgotten, about like an average TV Western.

-Reviewed by Brett Taylor

#### Happy Mother's Day, Love George

1973, dir. Darren McGavin (Taurean Films) Mysterious stranger Ron Howard arrives in a small New England fishing village. The locals are suspicious and regard him as a weirdo even though he's squeaky-clean and innocent compared to the scruffy fisherman and loutish construction workers around. Maybe it's because his black Pea Coat makes him look like a young Ahab-in-training, or maybe they just don't like

strangers, period. But then, the townsfolk have reason to be edgy, considering that four people have vanished in six months; a pretty high number in such a tiny hamlet.

It sometimes feels like half the movie consists of Howard wandering the beach, along with Don Vincent's mournful music wailing away with plaintive banjos and the like while singer Mark Martolf informs us endlessly that A man can be a very lonely thing. Occasionally all this slow-going sadness is disrupted by a strange sight such as the skeletal hand that no one seems to notice as it protrudes from the beach. An especially weird image occurs as a pale dead face (ANOTHER body) is uncovered from beneath the sand by a toddler, only to be covered up again.

This film would be great on a double bill with Welcome to Arrow Beach, the horror movie with a lot of Meg Foster walking the beach. That 1970 film was the directorial effort by actor Laurence Harvey, while the movie under consideration was the sole directing/producing job of actor Darren McGavin, who brought along his Night Stalker co-star Simon Oakland to play the sheriff.

When not morosely wandering, Howard snoops around the home of local eccentric Patricia Neal, who's mad that she has to go on welfare now that her trust fund's run out. This does nothing to curtail her haughtiness, as she insults everyone and orders the sheriff to carry

her groceries. And she's crotchety enough that, after a church sermon, she complains, that nonsense, togetherness and love, makes me want to puke. As strident as her character is, and though Neal blusters with a strange accent, the show is stolen by Joe Mascolo as her cheerfully sleazy neighbor. His obnoxiousness is enhanced by a hideous plaid jacket. He also sports long sideburns, but so does nearly every male in this movie.

Then there's Neal's daughter, played by Tessa Dahl. It happens that Dahl is also Neal's daughter in real life. Knowing this adds extra unpleasantness when Neal squabbles with her daughter and calls her a lazy bitch.

The distastefulness increases later when we learn that Dahl's character wasn't supposed to live but

inconvenienced her mother by surviving a botched abortion attempt. Now that she's a teenager she talks with a British accent, which is halfheartedly explained away — she picked it up from an English tutor who later disappeared. (In real life Dahl grew up in England.)

Dahl doesn't mind Howard's sneaking around the house a bit, and she takes an instant liking to him, though naturally keeping him a secret from her mother. She likes him so much that it's no time before she's disrobing, but her flaky attempt at seduction fails to work. Is it because she's jailbait? Could it be that Howard still retains his Mayberry-like innocence? Or is there some dark secret that links him with Dahl? You bet there is. Howard confronts the mother (Cloris Leachman) who long ago abandoned him, but she won't reveal the identity of the deceased father. Could it be that Dahl's absent father and Howard's mystery dad are one and the same? That wasn't hard to figure out, was it? As for who's behind those unexplained disappearances and beachside corpses, there's not much mystery either, since Dahl is so obviously unstable from the getgo, and since scripter Robert Clouse doesn't bother much with red herrings. Clouse probably didn't waste much time feeling bad about this, as he was about to reap the rewards of having directed Bruce Lee in Enter the Dragon.

It's all like Peyton Place gone psycho, but it often seems to be taking place in slow motion,



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with lots of talk and picturesque filler (plenty of pretty autumnal scenery captured by Walter Lassally, reliable cinematographer of Tony Richardson and Michael Cacoyannis films). The small-town atmosphere is well captured, with plenty of shots showcasing colorful old Victorian homes and the occasional forbidding cemetery. This is the kind of feel most Stephen King adaptations could use. McGavin sometimes tries to liven things up with odd touches such as weird freeze-frames and fast cuts that have a tendency towards choppyness.

Toward the end it feels as if things will liven up, as the bodies pile up and gruesome things occur. But Howard's final confrontation with his loony tunes half-sister lacks suspense, largely because Dahl is more pitiable than menacing, all the more so in light of parallels with her real life, as her troubled existence was compounded by difficult relationships with her parents. Neal and the notoriously cold Ronald Dahl, who incidentally wrote *The Night Digger*, another odd psychofilm with Neal. Another sad fact is that singer-turned-actor Bobby Darin, who here appears as Leachman's tough-guy lover, died shortly after. The film itself, a production of a Swiss outfit called Tauran Films, died pretty quickly after being released by Cinema 5 Distributors (who didn't last too long, either). The film was retitled *run stranger run*, turning up on video in the early eighties in a box that read *Run Stranger*. Run

**-Reviewed by Brett Taylor**

### Mad Dog Time

1996, dir. (Rung-A-Dung Productions) If you think Richard Dreyfuss is an annoying actor, he's even worse as a co-producer, as evidenced by this film, one of the desperate post-Tarantino attempts to cash in on the hipster audience. This takes place, for no special reason, on a parallel planet called *Vic's World*, populated almost entirely by obnoxious gangsters. One of the less unctuous ones is played by Jeff Goldblum, looking uncomfortable in heavy eye makeup. Henry Silva is Sleepy Joe and an unsufferable Kyle Machlachian is on hand, wearing a tuttleneck to make things worse. I would say Machlachian gives the most annoying performance ever, but Gabriel Byrne is in the movie, too, as Brass Balls Ben doing the worst overacting ever, complete with a variety of broad voices and accents, usually Irish but sometimes God knows what. These jerky thugs spend their time hanging out in nightclubs and shooting one another. Byrne gets to do a duet of *My Way* with the song's author, Paul Anka. This was in the mid-1990's, when lounge music was making a comeback among hip youths.

Everyone announces, *Sis's getting out!* about a thousand times, sending everyone into a frenzy or mad dog time as cigar-chomping Gregory Hines puts it. Just who is *Vic's*? He's Dreyfuss, a double threat here. What's he getting out of? The loony bin. None of this makes much sense, as it's all to hip for coherence. I think this nonsense is supposed to pass for Becken-like absurdism, or something along those lines.

Dreyfuss plays it straight, and his crazy character is the most sensible one around — the closest thing to a good joke in sight. Ellen Barkin shows up and casts smoldering looks

from time to time. Michael J. Pollard appears for about two minutes. In recent years his roles seem to consist of showing up at the outset and then vanishing, as in the recent *House of 1000 Corpses*, and the unreleased *turkey* *The Merchants of Venus*. Wheelchair-bound Richard Pryor appears for a few seconds as Jimmy the Gravedigger, in shades. He has ten words to say, which makes him better off than the rest of the cast, including Bart Reynolds, Angie Everhart, Diane Lane, Juan Fernandez, quiet Christopher Jones Billy Drago, Larry Bishop (who wrote, co-produced and directed this mess), Joey Bishop (because he is the director's father), Rob Reiner (who knows why?), and Billy Idol (huh?). Dreyfuss often looks stunned, as if he can't believe how awful it all is. This is the kind of movie where you check your watch every thirty seconds. The reviews were bad enough that distributors MGM/UA hastily disguised the film by renaming it *Trigger Happy* for the 1997 video release. Don't be fooled.

**-Reviewed by Brett Taylor**

### Mooch

1971, (A Jim Backus-Jerry Levine Production)

A failed attempt to launch a TV show, or a (roughly) one-hour tour of Hollywood? Both, but this tour is seen through the eyes of a dog named Mooch, played by the same dog who played Benji, according to the video box at least. The poor female mutt wanders Hollywood in search of stardom, inexplicably guided by the voice of Zsa Zsa Gabor, who hastens Mooch on her way when she lingers too long outside a porn theater. Mooch is not particularly impressed by a chance meeting with Mickey Rooney, for she wants to hook up with a real star, namely Vincent Price. She even fantasizes about running to his loving arms in slow-motion, on the beach. Meeting Price in the flesh, Mooch follows Gabor's advice to be sexy. Apparently Price can't resist a sexy dog, and picks up the furry little charmer, renaming her Shaggy. But he dumps her at an animal clinic, from which she promptly escapes.

Winding up at the Playboy Club, our canine heroine imagines herself in pink bunny ears. Unfortunately she's not wanted there either. Mooch next stars at the marquee of a nude club, triggering another fantasy/hallucination in which she dances about while offering patrons about things like, *Take it off, Honey!* Gabor sagely advises, *There are very few parts for four-legged strippers*.

This film was touted on video (where it's title was lengthened to *Mooch Goes to Hollywood*) as entertainment for the entire family, yet it's mighty peculiar family fun. Who, you might ask, was behind this warped shaggy dog story? Why, none other than Mr. Magoo/Thurston Howell himself, Jim Backus, who co-wrote and co-produced with partner Jerry Levine. I can only assume they were drunk at the time.

Mooch soon spies James Darren working on his car and fantasizes about HIM, complete with fireworks. Darren renames her Sunshine and takes her to the beach, where she follows a couple of bikini-clad bimbos, who abandon her to have a threesome with a sleazy middle-aged producer. Darren drops Mooch off at the clinic, promising to check up on her after making his next picture. Yeah, right. Like James Darren

ever had any pictures to make.

Mooch escapes to Paragon Studios, meeting huge stars like Jill St. John and even Jim Backus, who renames the dog Mrs. Magoo. Our little bitch gets so much attention that she falls into a swimming pool. When she gets out she is denounced as a fraud and becomes the laughing stock of Hollywood, which causes her to freak out and run away. Mooch may not be the star she wanted to become, but she does find happiness with her doctor (John Harding).

With sad narration by Richard Burton, and a voiceover by Dean Martin. Plus cameos by Phyllis Diller, Cesar Romero, Darren McGavin, Rose Marie, Edward G. Robinson, Sam Jaffe, a champ in a wheelchair, a glove-eating dog, a family of ducks, a headshop called *Psychedelic Conspiracy*, and lots of cute tricks for Benji/Mooch to perform. There's also a slapstick chase, part of it projected backwards. Plus a theme song by Sonny Curtis (which sounds like bad Roger Miller).

True masochists will want to pair this with *Woe Ton-Ton*, the Dog Who Saved Hollywood (1976). Mooch, incidentally, was shot by Allen Daviau, who later photographed a slightly more popular family movie, *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial*. Mooch's costumes were designed by Frederick's of Hollywood, if you must know.

**-Reviewed by Brett Taylor**

### Scars of Dracula

1970, dir. Roy Ward Baker (Starring Christopher Lee, Dennis Waterson, Jenny Harely, Christopher Mathews, Patrick Troughton - Hammer EMI)

This is Hammer's last serious attempt at a Christopher Lee Dracula vehicle. Released after Lee's portrayal of the Count in the same year in *Taste the Blood of Dracula* (sort of a sequel to *Dracula Has Risen from the Grave*), *Scars of Dracula* is more of a sequel to *Dracula, Prince of Darkness*.

*Taste the Blood* is more of a semantic ritualistic exploration of vampirism, whereas *Scars of Dracula* is a bloodlust orgy of sex, sadism, submission, and perversion by the Prince of Darkness. Sounds pretty damn good to me.

Most fans of Hammer Studios consider this to be the weakest entry of the series, propped up by gratuitous violence and sex. But if one stops to consider what the world would have been like without the early Hammer vampire classics to base these opinions upon, one could find themselves being highly entertained by a super-charged Dracula film — i.e., this reference should be taken on its own merits without reference to the studio's past.

Anchor Bay's DVD features, for the first time on home video, a wide screen edition of *Scars of Dracula* with contrast and color correction, restoring this film to its original theatrical luster. The DVD also features audio commentary from Christopher Lee and director Roy Ward Baker. Also included are U.S. and U.K. trailers, a still gallery and talent bios. The Limited Edition includes a bonus DVD featuring a 1995 documentary entitled *The Many Faces of Christopher Lee*. As if that weren't enough for Lee fans and Hammerheads worldwide, as supplements to this documentary are two 2001 music videos, one of which being *Ave*

Maria/It's Now or Never" sung by Lee in classic operatic style.

Quality product by Anchor Bay DVD. 95 mins.

-Reviewed by Jan Alan Henderson

### Circus of Horrors

1960, dir. Sidney Haynes (Starring Anton Diffring, Erika Remberg, Yvonne Monlaure, Yvonne Romain)

For most of us growing up in the '50s and '60s, horror films and Rock and Roll were all the rage, much to our parents' dismay. Most middle American families kept tabs on what entertainment was consumed by their Baby Boomer offspring. And after watching this new, restored version of *Circus of Horrors* from the folks at Anchor Bay, one can truly understand why parents were concerned. Not that kids of that era didn't lie and say they were going to a reissue of *Snow White* while being completely enthralled in this genre of cinema. When this reviewer saw the ads for *Circus of Horrors*, and Hammer's classic *Brides of Dracula*, he could only pine in silent resistance, hoping he would be able to catch these films at a later date.

In some ways, *Circus of Horrors* resembles a classic Hammer horror picture of the era. There are plenty of thrills, spills, chills, and enough sexy maidens and Euro sophistication to whet the ghoulish appetite. Not to mention a healthy helping of lions, tigers, bears, knife-throwers, aerialists, sad clowns, charlatans, and of course gorillas, (in suits so cheap that they're wisely underlit to preserve their simian integrity), all of which at one time or another add to the suspense by going berserk. Throw in a circus owner who performs quickie plastic surgeries on beautiful maidens (a la Bela Lugosi in *Black Dragons*, only more so), only to mesmerize them while seducing them, and then slaughtering them by all manner and means when he grows tired of their fanatic devotion.

But karma has a way of catching up to almost every villain in the last or second-to-last reel. Our antagonist, Anton Diffring, is no exception. Without revealing the climactic ending, let's just say that Diffring gets his comeuppance in agonizingly measured doses. Fortunately for the hormonally challenged male Baby Boomers of that time and the present, a half-naked Yvonne Romain has a sizzling scene with our antagonist during his period of comeuppance (Romain made this film a year before her slave girl role in the Hammer classic *Curse of the Werewolf*). No wonder our parents worried! Our duplicitous fathers probably went to see the thing the day it came out, and didn't tell our mothers or the rest of the family.

By today's standards, this is pretty tame stuff, but still classic to those who remember what it was like to go and see a really great Hammer double bill, or an Amicus film.

Anchor Bay has done a yeoman's job in representing *Circus of Horrors* on DVD. The colors are more vibrant than any video or laser disc release in the past, and the sound, while being monaural, is state of the art. This is a great show for introducing the younger generation to classic English horror cinema. Highly recommended. 92 mins. from Anchor Bay DVD.

-Reviewed by Jan Alan Henderson

### What's Up, Tiger Lily?

(1966, AIP, Woody Allen.) Probably because of his business dealings with Toho Studios importing Godzilla movies, producer Henry G. Saperstein found himself with one of their 007-inspired spy films, but didn't know what to do with it in America.

As comedy fans know, Woody Allen got a chance to do a little fine tuning on it. Even Woody was jokingly looking back at his early films as "the funny ones." But he's probably thinking of *Play It Again, Sam* or *Sleeper*.

However, years before those classics, and fresh off his work with TV shows like *Conrad Camera*, he got a chance to show what he could do with pure imagination, when almost anything was allowable, and nobody would really give a damn. The kids were going to make out to this film. As long as they got lots of cheap, sexy laughs -- a little after the style of a *Mad Magazine* in motion -- anything was fair play. And that's what resulted.

Woody wiped out the film's original soundtrack, sat down with his team of voice actors, and created something which was, in his words, "wholly other." The most absurd spy story, the raunchiest dialogue, were laid over the image on the screen. It was a riot, and perhaps the TRUE essence of Woody's humor, without being bogged down with things like socially redeeming content. It's straight laughs. In some popularity surveys, it still comes up as one of the most unique comedies ever. But I can't help wondering if Toho executives saw it and got the joke?

This film is back again, just released on DVD, including the Theatrical And the Television Audio Tracks. See it in the original wide screen format, with lots of extras. From Image Entertainment. Check out their website at: [www.image-entertainment.com](http://www.image-entertainment.com)

-Reviewed by Michael Copner

### Voodoo Academy

(2003, Dir. Dave DeCoteau. Starring Riley Smith, Chad Burrell, Kevin Calisher)

For 18 years Dave DeCoteau has worked his way from the ground floor up, teaching himself every aspect of filmmaking, assuring that he learned everything it was important for him know, in order to do what he wanted to do. Now he's in charge of his own show, making his own pictures. Impressively, he appears to be shooting on film, and in the wide screen format, when everybody else has a digital "studio-in-a-drum" on their shoulder to make movies with. Although he may be shooting with cable TV and DVD in mind, if the chance for theatrical showings arrives, Dave will be ready.

This film revolves around a young student

who enrolls in a Bible college, run by an enigmatic reverend and the seductive young lady who is his financier. Innocence is soon induced to follow the ways of evil, eroticism, and temptation. Debra Mayer as Mrs. Bouvier is a standout in a cast of new young gentlemen groping to come to grips with life in a world foreign to them.

This Lunar Edition is an extended director's cut, featuring over 3 hours of sizzling film, outtakes, bloopers, commentary tracks, photo galleries, and an optional "raw" audio track. Also included are bio's and a filmography on Dave DeCoteau, plus a trailer reel with commentary featuring over 20 previews of his films. DeCoteau continues to use American technicians, but has recently opened a studio in Canada, and will soon be introducing fresh new talent for our entertainment.

Someone at the company likes our magazine, or at least our name, since the DVD's are being issued under a "Cult Video" logo.

Reviewed by Dr. Frankenstein

### Dark Universe

1993, dir. Steve Latshaw

"Not for the squeamish or people afraid of Florida" warns the DVD, and I'm one of the latter, having been dragged through the state during childhood. Perpetually stuck in the beige leather of 1974, the "dark universe" that is Florida is a land cursed by fish, foam and traffic -- making it impossible to breathe or cross the street. Palmetto bugs infest the peninsula, and this film is about a crashed spacecraft whose astronaut pilot begins to look like a big palmetto bug. Padded with safari footage from the Everglades, political fall-out from the failed re-entry, and Broward County inbreds, this Steve Latshaw film is one where you'll pull for the monster to successfully digest the news reporter, the tour guide, the archaeologist, the grip, the gaff, the catered food tray to the left of camera and just about anyone who wandered on the set. DVD available from RetroMedia Entertainment.

-Reviewed by David T. Lindsay

Hell Houses are typical haunted houses with a right-wing Christian twist: Visitors are given a guided tour of the many sins of the flesh, such as abortion, homosexuality, drugs, drinking, family abuse, suicide, dancing and laughing. Skits performed by church members present little morality plays that end with ghosts and ghouls meting out divine punishment to sinners.

Documentary filmmaker George Ratliff heard of a nearby Assembly of God Church in Cedar Hill, Texas re-enacting the Columbine massacre as part of their Halloween festivities. Ratliff attended one such Hell House and was horrified to see the actors were using real (albeit unloaded) guns with excessive, shocking gore. Ratliff ingratiated himself to members of the church, filmed a short documentary that eventually grew into the full-length *HELL HOUSE*.

*HELL HOUSE* maintains an air of objectivity, but can't help expressing an air of appalled horror. The church's Hell House is staffed mainly from young teenagers, who fight for roles such as "suicide girl" and "rape victim." Auditions are held, and the kids line up to see



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who made the final cut. You get to play the rapist! chirps one happy lad. The elders of the church then go about constructing an impromptu theater that will house rooms exhibiting the results of drunken driving, abortion, AIDS and rave dances. Busloads of teens are then trucked out to the event to watch this moralistic Grand Guignol with the option of accepting Jesus at the end.

HELL HOUSE takes its time in establishing that the participants are well-intentioned. One actress says that acting in the project helped her forgive her rapists. One of the event's coordinators, John Casser, is presented as a deeply sincere man concerned with the path society has taken. A big bear of a man, he was left to take care of his family of five (which includes a son with cerebral palsy) after his wife left to pursue an Internet affair. Not coincidentally, one of the skins in Hell House involves a married woman pursuing a lover through the Internet who meets a violent end.

The church seems to be pursuing a hidden agenda. A play involving teen suicide has a young lady crying, "God! Why have you left me?" to an overly Catholic rendering of Jesus Christ. Not surprisingly, not a lot of the attendees buy it. A group of young people are shown arguing with a security guard that the situations in Hell House are presented in black-and-white fashion with no shades of gray. The guard has no easy answers for them, unlike the project he's worked so hard on.

The documentary seems to say that even the most misguided fundamentalist has a right to express their misgivings about society. HELL HOUSE raises a lot of issues about faith, tolerance and the world at large.

-Reviewed by Greg Goodsell

### Bubba Ho-Tep

Unrated. 92 minutes. Screenplay and directed by Don Coscarelli. Starring Bruce Campbell, Ossie Davis. Based on a short story by Joe R. Lansdale.

Of course this is the true story of what really became of Elvis Presley. Bruce Campbell does more than an adequate job of representing Elvis. He has me convinced that he may indeed be the real Elvis. It is the premise of this story that Elvis has been hidden away in an East Texas rest home after switching places with an Elvis impersonator years earlier. The impersonator died unexpectedly and the real Elvis decided that he would remain incognito.

Elvis eventually lands up in the rest home at age 60ish with a painful cancer growth on his penis and an injured hip. While undergoing treatment he finds himself doing battle with evil



Bubba Ho-Tep that sucks the souls of men out through their (sorry folks) asshole. Somehow, Elvis finds a co-hort in the form of a black John F. Kennedy and the two of them are determined to save the world and perhaps themselves. This is a comedy and horror film all mixed into one big gooey ball and instead of failing to bounce it manages to reach out and grab the audience by the balls (or arm) and you have no choice but to hang in there and hope that Elvis and JFK will provide salvation.

But before you think that this movie does not have merit. It is a master piece of balance. A true horror and comedy film at its best. The horror is big and the comedy is subtle but the timing is there. Oh yeah baby, the timing is there. Want more? [www.bubbahotep.com](http://www.bubbahotep.com)

-Reviewed by Coco Kiyonaga

### Soap Girl

Unrated. 90 min. Written by Tony T.L. Young. Directed by Young Man Kang. Leapfrog Productions. (Kerry Liu, Luciano Sabar, Gina Hirazumi, Hiromi Nishiyama, Mari Tanaka, Kate Holliday and Tomoko Lee.) This is the true to life

parlor. It begins with a young girl that has no where to go and ends up finding refuge in a massage parlor working for Mamasan played by Tomoko Lee. Mamasan is a motherly woman but only as far as it pays the rent. She is a beautiful but aging woman dependent on her gangster friend for protection and support. When he decides that he must have the young new girl all hell breaks loose and its a whole new Asian invasion that breaks out of the silken cocoon and emerges triumphant if only in round one. There are plenty of rollercoaster rides in this wonderful picture. Pathos, comedy, drama, and yes a bit of horror of life on the wrong side of the track. For more info: 323-954-1435.

-Reviewed by Coco Kiyonaga

### Santo: Infraterrestre

2001. DVD Starring El Santo, the Blue Panther, Diana Golden. Dir. Hector Molina. (85 min. Rise Above Entertainment.)

The past few years have seen the revival of many cinematic legends — Star Wars, Godzilla, Friday the 13th all have received updated images, and all with mixed results or worse. It should be as no surprise that this trend should finally spread to other world cinemas as well. Witness the resurrection of the Mexican masked wrestler El Santo in the new DVD *Infraterrestre*. The film tells the return of the Living Legend El Santo, which might come as a surprise to some considering El Santo died in 1983. In the film, Santo is none other than the original Santo's son, who used to wrestle under the moniker of The Son of Santo. It appears that now he has finally decided to claim his father's legacy outright and as far as I am concerned, more power to him.

The film retains much of the camp quality that made the original films from the sixties and seventies so beloved. The plot itself seems like it was taken from the fifths: a race of reptilian people from the center of the Earth comes to the surface to kidnap humans for medical research. Santo is once again called to duty to help a doctor (the lovely Diana Golden) rescue a little boy taken into the clutches of the lizard people. The films ultra-low budget is painfully obvious at times. The movie appears to take place in the future, with Santo having both a spaceship and a Batcave-style station in Earth's orbit. However, the special effects are just as ridiculously low budget as before, with bad computer effects replacing the tin-plate UFOs of yesteryear. If given the choice, I'd take the saucer war any day. The new Santo performs well, though his reedy voice (the film is in Spanish with English subtitles) is no match for the deep, dubbed baritone of his father in the Americanized movies such as Santo vs. the Zombies. However, my biggest disappointment is the paucity of wrestling in the film, and what there is of decidedly low quality. Santo movies always had extended sequences of Lucha Libre action (usually in wide-shot), but *Infraterrestre* instead opts for short bursts of wrestling, shot in the faster paced modern style. This would probably be a good idea, except that it appears that the director, Hector Molina, is not very adept at action. The cuts and shots are clumsy at times and the stuntmen often seem less than professional.

The supplement to the disc is ample and

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story of many Asian women who arrive in America hoping to find a new life. Soap Girl is a love story that takes place in a massage

CULT MOVIES

includes a full bout between the new Santo and (presumably) the new Blue Demon. However, most of the supplements are in Spanish and NOT subtitled. Hopefully future releases by Rise Above will remedy this. I cannot fully recommend this new addition to the Santo legacy to any but the die hard Mexican-wrestling fans, but I give them credit for trying, and hope that they do better next time. In the meantime, catch the classic movies, they are all coming out to DVD in the coming months  
-Reviewed by Joseph Alvarez

#### Yokai Monsters: Spook Warfare

(Japan, 1968, 90 min. Directed by Yoshiyuki Kuroda. Color. LBN. English subtitles. ADV Films).

Spook Warfare, aka Big Monster War, is the sequel to One Hundred Monsters (for some reason ADV films has opted to release the sequel first), a further attempt by Daiei studios to carve a niche in the Kaiju market of the sixties. Like the Camera films, Spook Warfare is definitely geared primarily for the children's market, but its bizarre atmosphere and distinct Japanese perspective on the spirit world ensure that it should be of interest to adults as well.

A demon is unearthed in Babylonia by thieves and does what any self-respecting Babylonian demon would do: it attacks a kindly Magistrate in Tokugawa-era Japan. The demon possesses the Magistrate and initiates a reign of terror on the townspeople, leaving a loyal servant and a troop of spirits to save the village and the good name of Japanese ghosts everywhere!

The film is directed by Yoshiyuki Kuroda, the special effects director on Daiei's previous entry into the Kaiju stable: the stone warrior Damajin. In fact, the costume for the Babylonian demon appears to be a cross between Damajin himself and a wild turkey. As for the other spirits in the movie, they include a cute-and-cuddly duck-billed water imp, a creepy long-necked ghost woman (my favorite), an umbrella ghost, and what appears to be a walking giant potato. The tone of the movie frequently shifts from slapstick humor to genuine creeps as Kuroda does these comical ghosts amid densely atmospheric cinematography and dark, dank sets (the film appears to have been shot completely in the studio). When the demon attacks his victims by draining their blood and possessing their body, the bloodletting is reminiscent of the Hammer films of the fifties, but with an Asian twist. Indeed the movie's greatest attraction for me was that, like Hong Kong's A Chinese Ghost Story, it provides the Western viewer with a look into an altogether alien subconscious. While an American viewer may be used to zombies, werewolves, and serial killers - I doubt very much that they've seen an umbrella spirit. There is a sense of exploration when you watch the film - you know you've seen nothing like this before in your life.

The print is a little muddy but on the whole decent. My one quibble is that the subtitles are not exactly loyal to the dialogue. I am no expert, but I am pretty sure the phrase that sucks wasn't in the vemaclar when this movie was made. Still, that is a small price to pay to see this sort of inspired lunacy. I recommend this

movie for people who love their kaiju, or who wish to see a quality example of early Japanese horror, or who want to instill in their children a healthy fear of household objects.

-Reviewed by Joseph Alvarez

**A Special CD review: Monsters and Heroes** by Zip Caplan and Cast of Thousands. I love fine music in many styles, but have rarely found satisfaction in crossovers in album themes. HOWEVER, if you think rock band and classic film score don't mix: YOU MUST HEAR T H I S WORTHWHILE ALBUM! Each track has its own appropriate tonal blend. To quote the liner notes, these cues: keep the essence and mood of the originals while adding the sound and feel of Rock, Blues, Funk and Latino.

The Rock base is beautifully augmented by such sounds as wordless angel-like female vocals, bass violin, harp and occasional sound bites consisting of original soundtrack snippets and spot-on recreations of beloved dialog. These augmentations are tastefully chosen and never obtrusive. If you love the great, classic intro bands, such as the Ventures and the Shadows, you will find much to enjoy here. In fact, Venture Nokie Edwards is a featured guest on this album. But there is so much more in store for the lucky listener.

The packaging shows Zip Caplan with several Stratocasters, and he is truly a Strat-slinger in the finest tradition! He and keyboard wizard Bernie Bomberg are at the heart of this wonderful project, and their Cast Of Thousands play expertly in many different styles. This album was 2 years in the making. I want to personally thank them for all the time and effort. That kind of dedication and perseverance are not easy to find ..... especially when most current pop acts don't even play their own instruments!

A few personal favorites: King Kong Son of Dracula - this is a perfect Rock realization of one of the greatest film cues of all time. The Cisco Kid features the two-guitar excitement of Caplan and Badfinger's Joey Moland. The Mummy (1932) suite, featuring a chilling use of a bowed bass fiddle, a spirited rendition of Faro La Faro Le (the festival of new wine song from

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FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE WOLFMAN) with a fine vocal by Dave Berger, who also recreates Lon Chaney's priceless, end-of-song party pooper dialog: the appropriate use of a harp, in TV's Adventures of Superman theme, is very welcome. The Mummy's Hand suite is truly amazing and it even includes the familiar light hearted and title music, which all vintage Universal film fans will recognize. This section includes voice artist John Field's expert intoning of the Curse of Amn-Ra. Field can also be heard on the Mighty Mouse Theme....."Here I Come To Save The Day!" (too bad Andy Kaufman isn't around anymore to lip sync to this version!) the suite from the original Godzilla film is a masterpiece, and should be used in the next Toho Big-G film; the keyboards of Bomberg are inspired. We Ride, from the Zorro serials, is thrilling and I love the Hank Marvin flavored guitar playing! There isn't a weak track on the album and you won't run from listening to this CD as opposed to Mariah Carey's "GLITTER" movie soundtrack CD & movie.

It's difficult to adequately describe this exciting and enchanting music, but I play it often & blast it in my car to bemused & curious rap fans who are stunned to for the 1st time to hear actual real music! The recorded sound is top-notch. The cover art is attractive, and has some nice poster reproductions. The liner insert notates the composer, cue title and musicians on each track. [litterlite@goldengate.net](mailto:litterlite@goldengate.net) \$15. includes shipping  
-Reviewed by Raven White

# GOOZILLA vs THE THING: WHO NAMED THIS THING?

*Godzilla and Mothra are the two monsters that duke it out in this film. Why, then, were there no mentions of Mothra in the U.S. title or publicity art? Michael Copner investigates.*

**S**hortly before Samuel Z. Arkoff died, I had an opportunity to meet with him for a short while and ask him a few burning questions about his 1960s films. The meeting was arranged by our mutual friend, producer Harry Novak, a man who worked in friendly competition to Arkoff's company for many years.

Sam Arkoff, together with James H. Nicholson, founded American International Pictures, a company which kept the drive-ins and hard-tops filled with youthful filmgoers at a time when the older generations were tending to stay home with the TV more and more. In addition to their domestic productions, AIP was responsible for bringing many Italian and Japanese films to American theaters, often co-producing and actively participating in the creation of the films from script to screen. In other words, these were not merely "pick ups," grabbed after completion, dubbed into English and thrown into theatrical runs in the lowliest grind-house bookings. In California, Edwards Theaters and Pacific theaters virtually built their drive-in empires on the popularity of output from AIP.

One of my favorite AIP releases has always been *Godzilla vs. The Thing*. And my question to Sam Arkoff was, "Who came up with the title for that film?"

My meeting with Mr. Arkoff was in the last year of his life and he was wheelchair bound and frail. But his mind was active, and it was easy to see dozens of memories reflect across his face as he thought back some 35 years. He earnestly tried to recall the circumstances, but finally had to admit, "I just can't remember who that was." I fear that secret may now be lost to the ages.

Both James Nicholson and Roger Corman have taken credit for establishing the AIP policy of making up a list of prospective new titles, then going to schools and asking students, "If you went to the movies this weekend, which film would you want to see?" The responses would be tallied, and the most popular titles would get turned into ad campaigns. Then, almost as an afterthought, AIP would make films to go along with the ad campaigns. They seemed to garner excellent profits with this procedure.

In the case of *Godzilla vs. The Thing*, the seed of the idea had probably started to grow at Toho Studios in Japan, as a follow up to both *King Kong vs. Godzilla* (1962), and the equally popular *Mothra* (1961).

Since Toho owned the characters, they could certainly do anything they wished with them. In Japan, *Godzilla vs. The Thing* was called *Mothra Against Godzilla*. Why was the name and image of Mothra so obscured in AIP's release in the United States?

Did someone at AIP think the idea of Godzilla fighting a giant butterfly was just too much for American kids to handle? Actually, Columbia had done very well with the American release of *Mothra* just a few years prior, but then again, maybe they still owed the name and likeness of Mothra in this country. The image of Mothra was purged from the two main ad

**WHAT IS IT...**  
**HOW MUCH TERROR CAN YOU STAND**

**GODZILLA vs. THE THING**  
"COLORSCOPE"

SEE the armies of the world destroyed!

SEE the BIRTH of the world's most terrifying monster!

SEE the war of the GIANTS!

AN AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL PICTURE Produced by TOHO CO., Ltd.  
© 1984 American International Pictures

# NOTHING LIKE THIS EVER ON THE SCREEN!

SEE the war of the GIANTS!  
SEE the BIRTH of the world's most terrifying monster!  
SEE armies of the world destroyed by "THE THING"

AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL presents COLORSCOPE

## GODZILLA VS. THE THING

AN AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL PICTURE Produced by TOMO CO. Ltd

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AD-MAT 542



designs made up for our stateside presentation. And largely from the coming attractions trailers, too. The Howard Hawks production of *The Thing* went clear back to 1951, for chrissake! Did AIP think we'd remember THAT, and expect to see James Arness fighting Godzilla?

I've often wondered if AIP did their usual product testing on this one, and shopped the list thing around to school kids before making their decision. If so, what other possible titles COULD this thing have had in an alternate film world? "Godzilla vs The Fly," for example? Or did AIP make this title in utmost secrecy, without the schoolyard voting method?

The newspaper ad and lobby card showing Godzilla wrangling with a giant censorship box with tentacles writhing out from behind it is very provocative. This was in an era when adult films were starting to be shown on a large scale, and newspaper ads for these "Mature" films often simply stated "Title censored" or "Call theater for titles." The new Godzilla film would have been in keeping with these tantalizing methods of promotion and may have helped stir up more curiosity than to simply show Mothra in all her glory. The alternate version showing Godzilla grasping the giant question mark is equally enticing, and adept at hiding what his

foe of the film might be. Nowhere in the publicity stories in the pressbook is there a hint that Mothra is in the film.

The only often repeated story in connection with the advertising is that someone

at AIP had the artist re-paint Godzilla several times before they felt things were satisfactory. But the real story behind the TITLE and the mysterious ad campaign, may remain exactly that. A mystery. ■



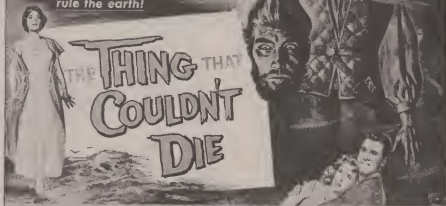
AND WHAT WAS BEHIND AIP'S "CENSORED" PANEL? WHY THIS GIANT SQUID-LIKE BEASTIE, SEEN HERE BATTLING GODZILLA IN THIS RARE BIT OF UNUSED ARTWORK.

# HORROR HEYDAY:

THE GRAVE CAN'T HOLD IT

... nothing human can stop it!

... it rose from the crypt to  
slake its monstrous thirst for  
beauty... and the power to  
rule the earth!



WILLIAM REYNOLDS · ANDRA MARTIN · CAROLYN KEARNEY · JEFFREY STONE

## ACTRESS CAROLYN KEARNEY

ON *THE THING THAT COULDN'T DIE*  
AND OTHER HORRIFIC HIGHLIGHTS by tom weaver

**I**n the late 1950s, Universal, Hollywood's legendary studio of horrors, seemed to finally begin running out of steam after 30 years of nearly nonstop monster movie production. Among the minor movies found at the tail end of this remarkable run, one stands out as ghoulishly imaginative: 1958's *The Thing That Couldn't Die*, a low-budget chiller combining threads of witchcraft and satanic possession in its flurried story of the disembodied but still-living human head of a fifteenth-century devil worshipper, found buried in a copper box on a modern-day California ranch. Among the

innocents upon whom this undying Thing head imposes its evil will is Jessica, the forked stick-wielding teenage girl who re-discovered it, played by Carolyn Kearney.

Born in Detroit and raised in New Orleans, Kearney acted on the stage of the Pasadena Playhouse and other theaters prior to her horror debut in *The Thing That Couldn't Die*. In total she made just four features but compensated with many TV roles, from *Playhouse 90* to *Lassie*, and including several of the top anthology horror series of the day: *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, *The Twilight Zone* and, most

memorably, *Thriller*, as the young wife of Dick York, menaced by Boris Karloff and a trio of resuscitated corpses in the chillbump classic "The Incredible Doktor Markessan."

Twice-married (now to an advertising executive-writer) and eyeing a return to acting, Kearney here recalls severed heads, walking dead men, coffin confinement and other offbeat highlights from her brief but busy Hollywood heyday.

**Cult Movies:** How did you get the co-starring part in *The Thing That Couldn't Die*?

**Carolyn Kearney:** My agent at that time

(CULT MOVIES)

was William Morris, which was a very big agency. I didn't have that many credits, just a few, but William Morris took me on, and they asked me to go for a [*Thing That Couldn't Die*] reading at Universal. I said, "Oh, great!" At that time, the picture was called "The Water Witch." I went over there - I remember sitting at a big desk and doing a reading for the four or five men who were also sitting around this desk. The producer-director Will Cowan was one of them. I read for the part of the "sweet" Jessica - Jessica as she is at the beginning of the picture. Then of course, later in the picture, once she falls under the spell of the disembodied head, she turns into that wild kind of person.

After I read for the "sweet" Jessica, one of the gentlemen asked, "Now can you be a mean Jessica?" I said, "Well, just a minute." I went into a tiny little ladies' room and I changed my hair - I wet it all up and pulled it back, and when I came out, I looked sort of maybe a little seductive, a little wild and a little weird. One of the gentlemen, I think it was Will Jason, said, "You've got the part" - I got it right there on the spot. I was dating a writer-producer named Harold Jack Bloom at the time, and he thought it was a good thing to do.

**CM:** What memories of your castmates?

**Kearney:** The gentleman who played the head in it, oh, what a wonderful actor. An extraordinary English actor who's since died, Robin Hughes. He was just very "true," he was very honest with his acting, and he listened to the other actors - he was, as I am, a listening actor. Because if you can't listen, how can you react? He did Shakespeare - at the drop of the hat, he would go and do *Hamlet* or *Richard III*. He loved to entertain so he would go into his characters, into different soliloquies that he remembered from the different stage plays that he did. He entertained the cast between takes. He was a truly brilliant actor and he should have gone much further than he did. He passed away about ten years ago, 15 years ago.

**CM:** When he was doing Shakespeare, was he in his horror makeup?

**Kearney:** [Laughs] Yes! You have to picture him with the horror makeup doing Macbeth and the other Shakespearean characters that he was brilliant at! [Co-star] Andra Martin was great, I liked her. She married Ty Hardin, and divorced him, and then she married the gentleman who owned the May Company, the big store here in Los Angeles. She married him and then divorced him as well! The man who played my boyfriend, William Reynolds, he was fine, a very upstanding and very stable actor. I liked him, too.

**CM:** 1958 was bad

times for Universal, not much production going on. Does this ring a bell?

**Kearney:** There really wasn't a lot going on around there, '58, '59. There were some movies being made, but not a lot. My gosh, nowadays it's so busy, with the tour and all of that. It's just an extraordinary place to go now.

**CM:** As you mentioned, for most of the movie you played Jessica as sweet, almost...

**Kearney:** I remember reading the script three or four times, and beginning to understand the simplicity of this young girl, and the fear that she had. I think she didn't trust men at all once she began to think about them, and think about how they could hurt her. When she was thinking simple and direct and honest, everything was fine. The minute that fear came in, then she had to protect herself by acting a certain way, which was mean and hostile. But, really, she was not. She simply wasn't very stable in her feelings.

**CM:** I couldn't help but notice what a small waist you had in that movie.

**Kearney:** Yes - thank you [laughs]! It must have been about 23 inches. Edith Head once said to me, "Carolyn, you have a very small waistline." And she was a tiny lady, she was like five foot.

**CM:** During production, the title was "The Water Witch" and so you were playing the title character. Were you disappointed in the title change to *Thing That Couldn't Die*?

**Kearney:** I wasn't disappointed, not really. Because it really didn't change my part. Oh, another thing I remember is walking up and down all those hills [dowsing] - my feet were so hot! Oh, God! But, boy, when you're [a beginning actress], if you're told to walk up a volcano, you're gonna do it [laughs]!

Me, anyway, I would do it. I would do it today if I could! Except I don't think I could walk up a vol-

cano any more!

**CM:** What do you remember about the scenes with the disembodied head?

**Kearney:** In one scene, Andra's character asks me to open a mailbox on a bed - I open it, and that's when I see the head for the first time. And Robin Hughes was actually under the bed, and his head up through the bed and in the box.

Will Cowan the director didn't tell me that, because he wanted to get my reaction. He wanted me to react to seeing this horrible head looking up at me from the box. Of course, the reaction was very honest and believable, because it scared me! There was no acting there!

**CM:** They were able to keep from you the fact that he was under the bed?

**Kearney:** Exactly! Then when I looked, it was very scary. Of course, at the end of the picture when I was



One of Kearney's earliest film roles was for an in-home Pasadena Playhouse production



walking around carrying his head in my hands, it was a prop made of some soft material – very icky! But I had to do it. It gave me a really...strange feeling. When the headless body stood up in the coffin, the guy was wearing an outfit that went up over his head and covered his head. The shoulders and neck of the outfit came up over his head.

**CM:** Do you recall seeing the movie for the first time?

**Kearney:** It was a preview or a premiere on Hollywood Boulevard, in an old movie theater that's still there. I think it was playing alone – I don't know why, because this was not a major movie [laughs]. It was so...different. I guess we didn't use the word "campy" then, but maybe we did. It was so...kind of...ludicrous. At the time we made it, I believed it – I couldn't have done it if I didn't believe in it. But now, looking back, it's funny in many ways. But also good.

**CM:** What was the audience reaction?

**Kearney:** There were a lot of gasps. Harold Jack Bloom, whom I later married, took me to it, and he was just so proud of me. He sat there with his arm over my shoulder, and he liked it. And he was hard to please – very, very hard to please!

**CM:** In Universal publicity, they made out that they discovered you – they said you were a student in New Orleans when they went there in 1957 to shoot *Damn Citizen*, and they gave you a part in the movie. But you were in Hollywood for at least a couple years already by 1957.



**Kearney:** The real skinny of it is that I came to Pasadena Playhouse in 1954 or '55 to go to the College of Theater Arts, Pasadena Playhouse. I studied there, I was in a class with Dustin Hoffman and Gene Hackman and some marvelous actors – they were actually a little ahead of me. It was a wonderful school. I went there and I studied, and I got on the Main Stage. The first one was *Man on a Stick*, which was with Stuart Erwin...the second one I believe was Maxwell Anderson's *Winterset*...I worked with Edward Everett Horton in a play called *The White Sheep of the Family*. I was the "white sheep of the family" – the only cat burglar in the family [laughs].

Have you ever heard of Gilmor Brown, who founded the Pasadena Playhouse in 1909? He was an extraordinary director and a humanitarian, and he also cast me in an "in-house" movie, a movie about a young girl, me, going to the Pasadena Playhouse. It was really terrific and it was "good film" on me when I was very young, 19 or 20. Gilmor Brown wanted to show off the Pasadena Playhouse, not show me off, but I



was in it, it focussed on me, a young person going into his Playhouse and going to classes and getting on Main Stage.

**CM:** During your early days in Hollywood, where were you living?

**Kearney:** My mother didn't want me to stay in Los Angeles-Hollywood by myself, she was very, very worried about me. The only way I could stay here was if I lived at the Studio Club [a rooming house for young actresses], a big, big building on Lodi Place. Now, you couldn't get a room at the Studio Club unless you had a job in the movies. So I got a wonderful part in *The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show*, their television show. It was really great, I got a recurring part as their son Ronnie's girlfriend and then I got the room at the Studio Club. This was the beautiful part: It was very inexpensive to live there. At the Studio Club, it was \$27.50 a week. With that, you would get a room, maid service, your linens changed every week, and you would get breakfast – no lunch – and dinner. Two meals a day,



beautiful meals. And all for \$27.50 a week.

That was really extraordinary! My room, Kim Novak had stayed there a few years before. Ruth Buzzi taught me how to cook Italian – she was a wonderful cook.

**CM:** And then movie parts started coming along, like *Hot Rod Girl* [1956] and *Damn Citizen*.

**Kearney:** In the interview for *Damn Citizen*, they asked, "Where are you from?", and I said, "New Orleans." "Oh!", they said, "this movie is going to be done in New Orleans." But by this time I had lost my [Southern] accent, 'cause I had played all kinds of stage roles. I got wonderful work at the LaJolla Playhouse as well, playing an English girl in Graham Greene's *Painting Shed* with Gladys Cooper, Cecil Kellaway and Leo G. Carroll.

**CM:** Jeze, them, Edward Everett Horton, Stu Erwin – you kept getting cast opposite with the oldest people on Earth, didn't you?

**Kearney:** [laughs] Yes! But, you know what? I learned so much as a very young girl, I was like a sponge. I had to change my accent to an English accent for *Painting Shed* – everybody was from England except me, I was the only American. I think of *Bridget Jones's Diary* [2001] with Renée Zellweger, because she had to play an English girl amidst all those English actors. Me when I was very young at the LaJolla Playhouse, I also had to become English.

**CM:** Then after that you did *Damn Citizen*.

**Kearney:** And for that, I had to get my



Southern accent back [laughs]. They flew me and the whole cast to New Orleans, and I was desperately afraid to fly – ooh, I was so afraid to fly. But I knew I had to do it, it was a job. I got over it, and I went there, and I did the part. I played the part of a young drug addict – a drug addict prostitute!

**CM:** How did you know how to play a drug addict? I'd like to think you'd had no real-life experience with drug addicts!

**Kearney:** Not at that time, I didn't. For *Damn Citizen*, I went and read a lot about it and I researched – she was a heroin addict. They had to put all the little dots on my arm with makeup. And I thought very sad thoughts, because I always like to work from the inside out and to think about it and to understand the character. I truly thought heartfelt thoughts, thinking what the person must have gone through before she would become a drug addict. When I was in New Orleans doing *Damn Citizen*, I got the key to the city. They gave me that and they also gave me a wonderful plaque, 'cause I was raised in New Orleans and they thought it was really neat that a person would go back and make a movie there. It was a thrill. It was beautiful to go back to the city where you were raised and to have that experience.

Then I came back to Los Angeles and I was dating Harold Jack Bloom. He was a producer and writer, he was nominated for an Academy Award for *The Naked Spur* [1953], and he did *Dragons* and, oh gosh, he did a lot of things. I ended up marrying him, a lovely man. He just passed away.

**CM:** Are you a widow now, or did you divorce him?

**Kearney:** We were divorced but he remained a friend of mine throughout my whole life. We had a son together, Charles Bloom, who's now living in New York, a composer and a writer of musicals. Harold and I were married for several years, and then we went to live in Europe when he was doing some movies there. Just a lovely man, a wonderful man...

**CM:** You're making him sound like the nicest guy you ever divorced!

**Kearney:** [Laughs] I know – that's exactly right! But at least we remained friends, there was never any animosity. It just didn't work out: I was quite young and he was a lot older, and he had never been married. But we have a wonderful son together, and that's so important.

**CM:** You also worked in TV – in fact, you worked a lot more in TV than you did in movies.

**Kearney:** Oh, so much TV, including *Playhouse 90* and a whole bunch of *Matinee Theater*. I was fortunate enough to be in all of those [kinds of series] in "the golden years of television." They were three-camera shows, and oh my God it was really hard, because you'd fall over the cables and

everything [laughs]! But you had to do it! Being on *Playhouse 90*, *Matinee Theater*, it was just like being on the stage.

**CM:** I asked you about your movie *Young and Wild* [1958] the first time we talked and you said that was fun to do. That was the last word I expected to come out of your mouth, because I think the movie's almost...

**Kearney:** Meant. It wasn't really fun to do – I don't know why I said that it was. It wasn't fun to do, because I was injured in that. Scott Marlowe [the main juvenile delinquent-villain] – oh, he just threw me around. There were three fellows gangling up on me, Scott Marlowe and his two cronies. Thank God I lived through it! I remember going home and having black and blue marks...oh, God. I don't remember totally the text of the movie, but I remember they terrorize me throughout. In the scene at the end where they're pushing me around in a cabin – I hated that, I hated it, I hated it! And I was scared of these guys, I was so scared of 'em, I didn't want to talk to 'em. In the breaks between shooting the scenes, I remember staying pretty much to myself because they were always very terrorizing and angry.

**CM:** They stayed in character?

**Kearney:** Yes, they did. Consequently, I didn't want to have very much to do with them, other than when I was doing the work. Ooh, they were just very "into their parts."

**CM:** On TV, you were on *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, in an episode called "You Can't Be a Little Girl All Your Life."

**Kearney:** Oh, that was good, wasn't it? That was with Dick York, and I later did a *Thriller* with Dick York too. He was just an extraordinary actor.

Alfred Hitchcock himself was on the set – I remember that very clearly. He didn't like my hair this way and he didn't like my hair that way – oh, he was so specific about different things that he liked and he didn't like. He was a very hands-on director, even with the television show.

**CM:** He didn't direct that episode, though.

**Kearney:** No, he didn't direct it, Norman Lloyd did, the actor-director.

Incidentally, there's a book out by Stephen Rebello, *Alfred Hitchcock and the Making of Psycho*, and if you turn to page 62, it says I was considered [for the role of Lila] in *Psycho*! "Actress Carolyn Kearney, a 'Doris Day lookalike,' had caught the director's eye while playing in a *Playhouse 90* drama. Instead of newcomer Kearney, however, Hitchcock cast 29-year-old, Oklahoma-born Vera Miles." That's in that book. Isn't that exciting?

**CM:** When did you first find out that you were up for a part in *Psycho*? When that book came out?

**Kearney:** I dimly remember my agent mentioned something, that Alfred Hitchcock was interested in me in that particular part

for *Psycho*, and then of course Vera Miles got it. As I told you, when I did my *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, Hitchcock was on the set a lot and discussed things with Mr. Lloyd. I called them "Mr. Lloyd" and "Mr. Hitchcock" – I remember always as an actress I would always call people "Mr." or "Mrs." That was very important to me. In New Orleans, we were always taught to call people "Mr." and "Mrs." When I was dating my future husband Harold Jack Bloom, I was dating him and at dinner with him, and I would say, "Mr. Bloom, would you please pass the salt?" [Laughs] It's true, Tom! That came so natural to me, because I went to Catholic school and all that business. I was taught to do that and I did it.

**CM:** And did Hitchcock talk to you about your hair, or to the hairdresser?

**Kearney:** He talked directly to me. [Sighs] It would have been wonderful to have been in *Psycho*. But I missed that.

**CM:** You were also in one of the best episodes of *Thriller*, "The Incredible Doctor Markesan."

**Kearney:** *Thriller* was unbelievable. With Boris Karloff, and all those very strange gentlemen [the reanimated corpses]! I read the script, and – my gosh, the idea of working with Mr. Karloff...! One thing I vividly remember: In the script, the husband was going to be in the coffin for the last shot of the episode. Dick York, he was supposed to be in the coffin.

**CM:** And you would have been the one to find the coffin and see him sitting up in it.

**Kearney:** Exactly. But at the table reading for it, they changed it to the wife – they were saying that I had to be in the coffin. Do you know what table readings are? We had table readings on many of the shows I did, *Dr. Kildare*, *Bonanza*, all the shows that were worth their salt have table readings, 'cause the table readings are what gives you the foundation, the feeling that you'll be able to do the show. Everybody in the cast goes to the studio in the morning and each actor has a copy of the script. We're meeting together for the first time, usually on a soundstage that has no sets, it's just a stark [arrangement] of chairs and a table. No makeup, no hair, no nothing. And then you read from the script, all the way through – no analyzing, no asking questions, no anything, just reading the lines. From page one right to the end. Then we'd read it through a second time, and that's when the director will come in and give different directions. Then the third time, generally, we can ask questions, "Do you think she would do it this way?" and "May I try this?" and so on.

Three times in one day. The next day we get our blocking. We're on our feet with the scripts, on the sets, and the director gives us our blocking. The third day, we do it for the camera.

Anyway, they told me at the table reading for *Thriller* that the script had been changed

and it was now my character, the wife, who was going to be in the coffin. I'm a person who says, "The show's got to go on!" in my head, and in my heart, but...getting in a coffin? I said, "Gee, when I got this script, it was the man that was in the coffin." They said, "Yeah, we decided to change it." I said, "Could you please put some holes in that coffin? Because when that lid comes down, it'll be terribly scary, I would think." — I was thinking ahead. And they said, "Are you kidding? That coffin is \$1800 — we're not gonna ruin it!" [Laughs] I thought, "Oh, God..." I asked, "Well, how can you get that coffin lid off of me quickly? I don't like the idea of being in it." They said, "We'll put a string on the coffin, and the minute it closes, then we'll pull it up." But of course, when we did the shot, the string broke! Oh, God, it was so horrible! But then the people came and got it off of me.

**CM:** Plus you wore a lot of makeup in that shot, to make you look dead.

**Kearney:** Yes, all that horrible makeup, making me up as a corpse. It was just a very terrifying [experience], because everything was very realistic. Oh, everything was — I can remember it to this day. I remember Dick York and I walking down that hallway, and they had cobwebs and all kind of things. The sets were filthy and dirty, and raty, and just really, really awful...ugh!

My mother was visiting from New Orleans, and she came on the set the day I did the scene in the coffin. And she fainted. That poor lady! She just couldn't believe it. I didn't get to [warn] her, 'cause they weren't supposed to do that scene that day. But then they changed things around and did want to do that scene, and my mom saw me in there and she just completely fainted. On the floor! "Mom, Mom! What's the matter?" It was very, very real, and very creepy. It was a scary television show to do.

**CM:** What was Karloff like?

**Kearney:** Oh, gosh! I'd have breakfast with Mr. Karloff and his wife every morning. Every morning he invited me to have breakfast with them in his limousine, and I just couldn't believe it. He would have tea, I remember. Oh, what a gentleman — just exactly the opposite of what you'd expect from the person who played the Frankenstein Monster and all those other horror parts. He was so lovely to his wife and he would take his wife's hand and help her out of the limousine. Of course, he wasn't a young man when he did that.

**CM:** I would have thought she'd be helping him out of the car by that point!

**Kearney:** [Laughs] That's right! But he was just so gracious and attentive and loving to her. And as an actor, when you would get on the set, he really knew his p's and q's, he just really knew his spots. And, the old saying is true, you're only as good as the actors you work with. I've been very fortunate working with [good] actors. Remember Ben

Casey? I had some terrible experiences with him, the gentleman who played Ben Casey. **CM:** Vince Edwards. I never hear anything good about him.

**Kearney:** Oh, you don't? Oh, he was totally ungracious and totally unprofessional, in my view. Whereas Mr. Karloff was just totally professional. He knew everything he had to do, he knew what you had to do, he knew the lighting, he knew if the makeup wasn't the way he felt that it should be. He was the master of horror. I learned so much about terror doing that film, I can't tell you how much I learned. When I wasn't working, I would stand on the sidelines watching him, just watching "the craft." Everything was so spontaneous-looking, because he had crafted so much of it before he did it. I'd be sitting behind the camera, or standing behind the camera, or sitting or standing in the corner, just to watch true genius at work. And I learned a lot. He should have never died. He was one of the people I felt ought to have gone on and on and on and on. I guess maybe he's doing the same thing up in Heaven, who knows? I believe that!

**CM:** And you rode to work with him in a limousine and had breakfast during the ride?

**Kearney:** Oh, no, no. To get to the studio, I drove myself, I didn't get to go in the limousine. (It would have been nice, but I didn't!) I would drive myself, and then when I was there, in my dressing room, he would say, "Miss Kearney...would you like to have tea?" "Oh!" I said — and then I couldn't talk any more! Then I'd mumble out an "Excuse me...!", and he would say again, "Would you like to have tea?" And we would have tea and scones in his limousine, with his wife.

**CM:** He would go sit in his limousine to have breakfast?

**Kearney:** Yes, in the limousine, which was on the soundstage. I was, like, so overwhelmed. He was so lovely and nice and kind, and his wife was so sweet too. They were "up in years" then, as some older people say!

**CM:** Why would anybody get into a car to have breakfast?

**Kearney:** I don't know but he did. I can't imagine why. That was weird!

But it was charming and I just couldn't believe it, because I remembered the movie *Frankenstein* [1931] and the Monster and the little girl and then throwing the flower petals in the lake, and then the Monster throwing her in the lake! We all have that memory of Boris Karloff playing Frankenstein, right? Just the most extraordinary Frankenstein! And now here I was having tea and scones with Mr. Boris Karloff! **CM:** Do you know who co-wrote *Frankenstein* and was originally supposed to direct it? Robert Florey, your director on that *Thriller*.

**Kearney:** Robert Florey, oh, he was a master. We don't have those people any more — darn! He and Boris Karloff would talk to

each other, quietly, and then come very prepared on the set. They seemed to get along, they were very fine technicians.

**CM:** Did Florey work with the actors much?

**Kearney:** Yes, he took time to work with each actor. Robert Florey was the kind of director who truly wanted to take time, and he did especially working with Boris Karloff. And remember the corpses? Oh, gosh, each one of those gentlemen [Richard Hale, Basil Howes, Billy Beck] had like a hundred years of experience, it seemed [laughs].

**CM:** It must have been creepy, even between takes, having those guys underfoot all day.

**Kearney:** Yeah, it was creepy, because they of course stayed in costume. Once you get there at five o'clock in the morning and get your makeup and your costume, it's really too hard to take it off. So you keep it on until just before you go home at night. I remember at lunchtime they could open their mouths just a teeny, teeny bit [to eat]. Or drink a milkshake or something through a straw. I don't know if they were movie actors or theater actors, but they too were total craftsmen and total professionals. What a wonderful experience I had on that. I was thrilled to be on *Thriller*!

**CM:** And another "fantastic TV" credit, *Twilight Zone*'s "Ninety Years Without Slumbering."

**Kearney:** Yes, with Mr. Ed Wynn, who was quite elderly then. You're right, I did work with a lot of older people [laughs].

**CM:** You're still younger now than all those guys were back then!

**Kearney:** I played a pregnant girl in that, his granddaughter. In the story, Ed Wynn was an old clockmaker who thought that, the minute that his grandfather clock stopped, he was going to die. Many of us have in our lives something a little like that. I have a ring that's like 105 years old, a beautiful ring from Cuba. My grandmother gave it to me, and I always think of it as something that brings me good fortune. And so this gentleman, Ed Wynn, thought the grandfather clock was his lifeline, and if that would run down and stop, he would die. I remember that, Ed Wynn being up in years at the time, when he had to go up and down the stairs [on the set], I had to help him.

**CM:** You're not talking story-wise, you mean you actually had to help him.

**Kearney:** Right, because he was having trouble. He would lean on me, and then he would say, "Oh, but you're pregnant! I don't want to hurt you." I said, "But Mr. Wynn, I'm really not pregnant, I'm playing pregnant. You can lean on me any time you want to!" "Oh, that's right, that's right!" — he laughed, he liked that. I just had a big ol' pad in my tummy, to make me look pregnant. I had actually just had a baby, so I knew how it felt!

So I do remember he had a hard time going up and down the stairs, up and down the stairs. The director [Roger Kay] had him do it quite often, and he was getting very

winded, and I said, "Well, let's take a little time out and take a breath," and so we did. I remember that he was very eager - he had to be pushing 80, but he was eager and he was interested. I think that's what kept him going, his eagerness and his interest.

**CM:** Did you get to meet Rod Serling when you did *Twilight Zone*?

**Kearney:** Rod Serling was on the set, 'cause he was also the producer. He was there and he was very protective of Ed Wynn. He wanted to make sure that Ed Wynn had his chair and he wanted to make sure that Ed Wynn was well taken care of and that they didn't work him too hard. Roger Kay didn't do any of that, but Rod Serling was very instrumental in making sure that he was well taken care of. Roger Kay was a little frenetic, and not taking the time that Robert Florey [on *Thriller*] and some of the other directors did. Roger Kay was sort of "rushed," and you can't do anything good if you rush.

Keenan Wynn, Ed Wynn's son, was also there to support his dad. I think he was worried about his father, because his father was in ill health, and he was like, "Now, Dad, I'm gonna be right here..." Remember the scene where Ed Wynn's character dies, and you see his spirit rise up from his body, and then there are two Ed Wynns, the spirit and the body, having a conversation? On the set, Keenan Wynn was actually the person that Ed Wynn was speaking to in the scenes where [in the finished episode] Ed Wynn was talking to "himself." Keenan Wynn came in and did that. It was great to see father and son working back and forth and back and forth.

*Twilight Zone*, my main memory about that show is that I just so enjoyed doing it.

**CM:** You kinda lucked out. Not a lot of the

actors appearing on *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* got to meet Hitchcock, not a lot of the actors on *Thriller* met Boris Karloff, and not a lot of the actors on *Twilight Zone* met Rod Serling - but you met all three of 'em! **Kearney:** I met all three of them! I was fortunate, you're right - very, very fortunate. Not everybody got to meet those people because they were often just the hosts. I'd also met Rod Serling when I did a *Desilu Playhouse* called "The Time Element" [a 1958 time-travel fantasy scripted by Serling]. William Bendix had the lead, and I remember he was very "ready" - he had all his lines learned! And Jesse White was always joking around and being very funny. Rod Serling was on the set all the time - I don't know why, but he was there.

**CM:** In recent years, you've helped form a group called Benzodiazepine Anonymous.

**Kearney:** Yes, with a psychiatrist named Dr. Ronald G. At one time, I was addicted to Xanax and nearly lost everything. I started taking the drug after becoming extremely claustrophobic after being trapped in my room on a train, in a train accident on my way east. I went to a doctor, and he said, "Oh, take Xanax. It's not addicting." And as you've read in all of the papers and see on television, it's actually very addictive!

There are many doctors who are wonderful - but there are also many doctors who give these pills out like they're candy. And they can not only cause physical damage, they can affect your mind, your judgment. They affected my mind and my emotional well-being. I was addicted to that for about two and a half years. I'll send you a copy of the book

*Prescription Drug Addiction*, in which I wrote an essay for the chapter "Voices of Recovery" and tell my story.

**CM:** And an attack of claustrophobia started all this? I guess you

were the wrong person to ask to get into that coffin on *Thriller*!

**Kearney:** [Laughs] You're right! The train incident was how I got addicted to Xanax. This dependency took away my dreams and my belief in myself. My therapist and psychiatrist seemed uneducated about the dangers of this drug and they said I'd have no trouble getting off it. I entered a treatment center in August 1987 and my stay was 40 days. My "birthday" is September 15, 1967 - that's my "recovering birthday," my "sobriety birthday." I made 15 years in August 2002.

In 1989, in L.A., I co-founded Benzodiazepine Anonymous, a 12-step group for those recovering from addiction to benzodiazepines. We have speakers, doctors and psychiatrists and recovering people, come to speak. It's very much like AA, because AA was founded by a doctor and a lay person, and BA was founded by a psychiatrist, Dr. Ronald G., and a lay person, me. I worked with this marvelous psychiatrist for seven years and wrote the steps and the goals and the code of ethics and principles. I started it all over the country, it's really helping a lot of people and it helps me on a weekly basis. I'm so proud of the work that I do. And I also want to return to acting - I do so want to return.

**CM:** If you had to choose between continuing on with Benzodiazepine Anonymous and resuming an acting career, which would you choose?

**Kearney:** I wouldn't choose, I would do them both.

**CM:** [Laughs] That's cheating! You have to pick!

**Kearney:** I would do them both because I can do them both. I'm still young enough to do them both. I still have the energy to do them both. Hundreds of people [in the Benzodiazepine Anonymous program] depend on me, and I surely wouldn't want to give it up. ■



Andrea Martin (left) and Carolyn Kearney (right) in *The Thing That Couldn't Die*, or, rather *The Thing That Couldn't Die*

# The Life of Lon

Horror star Lon Chaney, Jr. was considered as the lead for early sitcom *The Life of Riley*?

by Tom Weaver

Lon Chaney, Jr. — TV sitcom star? It's difficult, almost impossible to picture, but shortly after Chaney, Jr., completed his run of Universal monster characters (the Wolf Man, the Frankenstein Monster, the Mummy, Dracula), he was briefly considered for the role of the bumbling family man Chester A. Riley in the early (starting in 1949) television series *The Life of Riley*.

The notion to cast Chaney as the lovable lug was short-lived, and this "revoltin'" development was soon forgotten — but now, after almost 55 years, the Riley character's creator Irving Brecher checks in with a few sketchy but amusing memories of Chaney.

Brecher not only created Riley for radio (William Bendix played the role over the airwaves) and later brought the character to the big and small screens (played by Jackie Gleason and Bendix), he has directed a few features and written a number of screenplays, from *Bye Bye Birdie* and *Meet Me in St. Louis* (garnering an Oscar nomination) to a pair of Marx Brothers free-for-all. (He is also a distant relation of actor Egon

Brecher, Boris Karloff's sinister "Majordomo" in the 1934 horror classic *The Black Cat*.) Irving Brecher remembers Lon Chaney:

**Irving Brecher:** There isn't a bell of a lot that I can tell you. I'm generally pretty good, my memory is pretty good for someone my age, but [in this instance] I cannot recall much in terms of detail. I know I was in New York and I was auditioning for



**Gleason:**

**Yep.** someone to play Riley in the TV series — I couldn't get William Bendix, who was on the radio for me. Agents were rounding up all kinds of people, men, for the possibility of casting one. When they brought the name Lon Chaney to me, I said, "I don't think so. I saw him in *Cy Mice and Men* [1939], he was great, but he's a huge man. I'm looking for someone who

has a comic streak in him." But they prevailed on me to give him a try.

I think I met Lon Chaney in New York but my memory, my feeling is that the little bit of footage we shot with him as Riley was shot here, California.

The only thing that I recall about him, aside from the fact that he was nice and sweet, a very nice person, was that one day when we were working, I guess on the set, he opened a bottle of beer with his teeth. He wasn't trying to show off, he just took the beer, put the cap in his mouth, closed

**Chaney, Jr.: Nope.** h i s  
m o u t h  
a n d

opened the beer. That was a nice piece of work, but I wasn't about to hire him!

I ran the footage for the sponsor, Pabst Beer, and it was obvious that he was not right for the part. He was a *hausage* guy, and I had the feeling that he would be totally wrong playing a family man. If you're familiar with the Riley character, you know we were looking for somebody who would be helpless. He didn't look helpless.

We eventually went with Jackie Gleason. *The Life of Riley* helped start Gleason in TV.

I thought Lon Chaney was a good actor. But [his performance as Riley] didn't ring a bell. He was not right for that character. I don't know where that footage is now. ■

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# SCREAMIN' JOE'S

## R RESTRICTED

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A Review Column from our '70s Drive-In Expert, Joe Wawrzyniak

### DON'T TAKE THE BLUE ACID, MAN:

## BLUE SUNSHINE & THE SELLING OUT OF THE LOVE GENERATION

Made immediately after his impressive debut feature *Squirm* (1976), writer/director Jeff Lieberman's quirky sophomore effort *Blue Sunshine* (1977) has got to be one of the most off-beat and distinctive fright films from the gloriously idiosyncratic '70s. The film is an ingenious blend of horror, detective, and conspiracy movies which not only delivers the requisite thrills and chills in ample abundance, but also punctuates said harrowing scores with a uniquely twisted sense of black humor and, best of all, a fiercely biting and incisive critique of how many formerly radical '60s hippies sold themselves out in the '70s and complacently became members of the repressive square establishment they initially opposed.

*Blue Sunshine* begins with a college reunion of Stanford University students who all graduated in 1967, the much-fabled Summer of Love. Most of these erstwhile long-haired rebels have mellowed out and conformed, with the notable exception of stubbornly insouciant—and currently unemployed—Jerry Zipkin (played by the chronically odd Zalman King, in characteristically twitchy, fretful, all wired and sweaty angst mode).

During the middle of a groovy finger-snapping Frank Sinatra impersonation, Frazzle Scott (Billy Crystal's brother, Richard) loses his wig, revealing that he has gone almost completely bald. Scott flips out and viciously butchers several people. Zipkin kills Scott in self-defense, but the cops who arrive on the case falsely accuse him of committing the slayings.

Zipkin, now a wanted fugitive, goes on the lam. His subsequent investigation to find out why Scott freaked uncovers an especially potent form of LSD called "blue sunshine" that many Stanford acidheads took back in '67. This LSD was sold by Professor Flemming (*Lost in Space* series star Mark Goddard in a surprisingly credible performance), a one-time Timothy Leary-style

acid guru who's now a very powerful politician running for Congress. Naturally, Flemming wishes to keep his dirty hippie drug dealer past a secret, thereby exacerbating the severity of Zipkin's already grave predicament. Poor Jerry has to capture a live Blue Sunshine casualty on his own in order to prove that they even exist and subsequently attest to his own innocence.

Inventive, intriguing, and occasionally quite funny, *Blue Sunshine* ain't your garden variety horror flick. The film's astute social criticism in particular really hits the spot. Token man-of-staunch-integrity Zipkin is perceived as a loser and a failure by his peers; Zipkin is clearly based on '60s radical Abbie Hoffman, as both the somewhat similar last names and the casting of an obviously Jewish actor soundly confirm. The fact that Zipkin spends most of the movie being hounded by the cops further confirms the Abbie influence; Hoffman himself was on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted List at the time *Blue Sunshine* was made.

Fleming likewise is patterned after another famous '60s radical. In this case it's Jerry Rubin, who after parting ways with Hoffman became a successful Wall Street business executive. Think about it: There isn't much difference between running for public office and working in an office, now is there?

The acidheads losing their hair ten years down the road is an especially nice touch. Figuratively they lost their rebellious long hair a long time ago by becoming respectable middle-class citizens: doctors, housewives, politicians, and politicians. This point gets hammered home in the movie's single most terrifying scene: a crazed knife-wielding babysitter attempts to kill the kids she's supposed to take care of, in essence trying to destroy the very things which make her an acceptable member of staid straight-arrow society.

Besides Lieberman's fine, assured direction and wickidly witty script, *Blue Sunshine* is further blessed by King's winningly wimpy and unconventional hero: Scared, nervous, and vulnerable (King winces when someone touches his wounded shoulder and even gets spooked by a department store mannequin!), King's Jerry Zipkin makes for a totally believable and sympathetic reluctant everyman protagonist ala Ray Lovelock in *Breakfast at the Manchester Morgue*. (King's other equally bizarre acting credits include playing a phony hustler Christ in *The Passover Plot*, a romantic obsessive rich mope in the profoundly wonky and haunting *Some Call It Loving*, a deranged bikie rapist lunatic in the wonderfully trashy *Trip With the Teacher*, and a neurotic astronaut in the gory *ALIEN* copy *Galaxy of Terror*.)

Moreover, late, great character actor Brian James has a hilarious bit as a zonked-out kook who acts strange at the college reunion party, longtime favorite fat guy (cheap Disney Giamchi makes a brief appearance as an asshole homicide detective, and Ray Young (the hirsute, grunting Sasquatch on the thoroughly wackoid *Sid and Marty Kraft Saturday morning kiddie series Bigfoot and Wildboy*) contributes a frightening turn as a lethal Blue Sunshine victim who has a horrifying violent outburst in a disco.

In fact, the scenes where the Blue Sunshine psychos go homicidally berserk are all genuinely shocking in their abruptness and brutality, with Lieberman's marvelously queasy line in dark off-center humor making these bloodcurdling moments all the more unnerving. The finale—with Zipkin, armed with only a dart gun, stalking Young in an abandoned shopping mall—is a first-rate nail-biter. Kudos also to Don Knight's sturdy cinematography and Charles Gross' spare, eerie score.

Although *Squirm* stands out as an imaginatively grotesque '70s "killer animal" entry, and although Lieberman's *Just Before Dawn* (1981) rises above many other early '80s *Friday the 13th*-inspired wacko-in-the-woods slasher films because of its *Deliverance*-style Darwinian kill-or-be-killed theme, *Blue Sunshine* still qualifies as the director's best, most extraordinary and unmatched horror movie outing.

And hardcore *Blue Sunshine* buffs have a great reason to rejoice, because Synapse Films has recently re-issued this gem with an outstanding deluxe special edition DVD. It's been lovingly restored to its original anamorphic widescreen splendor with breathtaking digital clarity and a bang-up 5.1 Dolby Stereo Sound mix, complete with a highly entertaining and illuminating director's commentary, the extremely rare theatrical trailer, a fascinating 30-minute Jeff Lieberman career interview, cool liner notes, foreign poster art, a behind-the-scenes still gallery, the ingeniously barbed and disturbing satirical short film *The Ringer*, and even a superbly spooky bonus soundtrack CD. ■



# BLACK DRAGONS

## Lugosi at His Most Unusual???

Perhaps the strangest film Bela Lugosi ever performed in was the Monogram mystery, *Black Dragons*, released in April of 1942. At the time of original release, entertainment trade papers treated the film rather seriously. But in more recent times, it has become the butt of some rather Black humor. Film critic and Lugosi historian Arthur Lennig said, "After Pearl Harbor was attacked on December 7, 1941, the 'Japs' rapidly joined the Nazis as the world's prime villains, and Lugosi's accent was drafted. Cashing in on the new international developments, Monogram concocted

a topical script (probably on New Year's morning) and in early 1942 released *Black Dragons*." The story was inspired by an actual Japanese spy organization calling itself "The Black Dragons."

Although Monogram wasn't about to spend any money on national promotion for the film, they did provide local theater owners with some still photos of Lugosi holding merchandise, such as the Remington Electric Shaver, and a bottle of Acme Beer, which could be used as tie-in gimmicks and cross-promotion. ■

### His WEIRDEST Role!



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**BLACK DRAGONS**  
with  
**JOAN BARCLAY**  
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So here we are in a grubby little neighborhood movie house in a dingy working class section of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The year is 1960. It's a Saturday afternoon, and we've already sat through 17 cartoons.

Now it's time for the double feature, and what a bill it is. Two absolutely beastous and truthful films, both adaptations of classic science fiction works: *The Time Machine* and *Journey to the Center of the Earth*. You cannot out-classic H.G. Wells, the father of modern science fiction literature, and Jules Verne, the grandfather of the same deal. I will treat the latter film in a future article; for this afternoon, this afternoon of long ago and far away, a different world in its own right, really, an epoch lost in time, we will take as our text the first ever story about a machine that can travel through time and convey a man with it.

This is the primal time machine. This is *echt* science fiction, and if ever a gadget looked like incunabula, this time machine does, a Victorian fantasy of brass tubing, red velvet, ebony, and crystal, glints of pewter here and there. It has a big seat for the operator in the middle, and a big gleaming disc behind him that spins when the machine is operating. It is the neatest, most beautiful piece of Victorian technology imaginable. My jaw drops as a sense of wonder hits like a tsunami.

The movie is produced and directed by George Pal. I've heard his name before. He's a name-over-the-title producer, one of a very few, like Alfred Hitchcock, Mike

**I'M GONNA GET VICTORIAN ON YOUR ASS:** George (Rod Taylor) roughs up some Morlocks in this *Time Machine* publicity shot



## A LOOK BACK AT GEORGE PAL'S *THE TIME MACHINE*

by John DeChancie

Todd, and David Selznick, of whom the public has any awareness.

Pal is not as big a name as the above mentioned three, but he's done other films I've seen: *Destination Moon*, which I've caught on television; *War of the Worlds*, which ran at this very theater when re-released to cash in on the current sci-fi boom; and *When Worlds Collide*, which also plays the late-night movie circuit on local TV stations around the country. I've liked all that I've seen of Pal's oeuvre, so I'm more than ready for this addition to his growing list of triumphs. And he does not disappoint.

What is it about the smell of popcorn that is so magical? Oh, maybe it's not the smell itself, it's what it is associated with,

Sights and sounds that dazzle, that transport, that send you into a future time almost a million years from now. That's where George, the protagonist, played vigorously by Rod Taylor, is transported by his gleaming brass and velvet machine.

My tiny pre-adolescent mind reels at the date on the indicator. The year 802,701 A.D.! Hey, I think, that's pretty darn far into the future. I mean, I would have been impressed by 8027 A.D., a mere six thousand years from the mundane now of 1960. That would have blown me away. But eight-hundred two thousand, with mother seven hundred odd thrown in? I'm tingling with wonder and delight. I chew another Milk Dud.

This is not the most lavish production

ever staged, but it does not look cheap. I don't know what the budget is, nor care, but the film looks opulent to me. And believe me, I've seen cheap.

(Dumfounded and numb with incomprehension, I have at this same theater sat and tried to fathom *Robot Monster* in its first and possibly only run in the US and Canada. Exotic movie fans today drop their mandibles when I tell them that, yes, I've seen *Robot Monster*, but didn't catch it in the video room at a convention or at home on DVD. I saw it in a movie theater when it *FIRST CAME OUT*. How I missed *Plan Nine from Outer Space*, I'll never know.)

So, this movie about a time machine looks damned gorgeous, for all that I read now

that Pal produced it on a pinched budget. The machine itself is exquisite, and you want to move right into the period sets. They are homey, comfortable, and right. The future world is suitably exotic. The movie's lush musical score is un-Romantic, with a main theme that rivals the best of Rachmaninoff (and maybe pilfers a little from his second concerto?). This is no Poverty Row program picture. This is no cheapjack potboiler from the likes of Corman or Arkoff. This was produced at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, at that time still the biggest studio in Hollywood.

The picture is photographed in gorgeous "Metrocolor." I have previously published articles in which I discuss the use of color in science fiction and fantasy films. To some bafflement, I must admit. People who catch these films years later on VHS are seeing faded dyes of battered old release prints, sometimes 16mm ones. When I talk about the vibrant colors of *This Island Earth* or *Forbidden Planet* or the film under discussion, I am talking about the way the first release prints looked, fresh and crisp and new, running through well-oiled projectors that threw a sharp picture over half an acre of screen. We're not talking about squinting at a postage stamp in some twenty-four screen multiplex at the mall.

No, I sing the way things used to be. (And shut off that infernal Dolby gizmo, please; it's breaking my eardrums. We have perfectly good sound systems back here in the past, thank you. Multi-track, magnetic-stripe "high-fidelity" stuff, and like that. No improvements necessary. We now return you to our regular program.)

As I said, a richly opulent color production. The colors seem true to the period. The reds are deep and warm. Polished brass glitters goldily. The crystal of clock faces sparkle. The scarlet damask walls make you want to snuggle against them. Though the sets number in the single digits, they are all convincing and have a lived-in look. And this effect is produced largely by use of bright natural color. George's maroon-trimmed smoking jacket looks elegant and gentlemanly, and not a bit affected. He wears it like a second skin.

George gets into his time machine and moves the crystal control rod forward. The thing whirs and vibrates, the disc spins, throwing a temporal field around the mechanism and its occupant, and things start to happen. Candles instantly burn down and gutter, clocks go crazy, flowers bloom and wither and bloom again; the sun becomes a bright streak in the sky, the moon a glowing blur. The stars wheel. Pal seeks an inexpensive but ingenious solution to the problem of showing the swift passage of time. Simple but clever time-lapse photography and "stop motion"

stops the machine and gets out to explore. He finds his house mysteriously boarded up and full of dust and cobwebs, but untouched, as if awaiting his return. Across the street he runs into a friend, name of Philby. George has shown this man and some others, at a dinner party he gave earlier that night (back in 1899), a working model of the time machine. Philby and the others remained skeptical. But this man isn't Philby himself. It's Philby's son, seventeen years later. It's 1917, and the Great War, the War Wells called an "international catastrophe," is in full swing. The young

Philby is in uniform. George the time traveler is hard put to understand what's going on. He retreats to the house and his machine and hurtles headlong into a darkening future. A little more than two decades later he runs smack into the Blitz. Another world conflagration. Is the future nothing but strife? George begins to despair.

Pal has a problem here, and his scripted solution produces the film's weakest spot. The novel on which the film is based contains little on what happens between Well's era and an improbably distant future. There are hints later on in the story about yet another total war that devastates the world and reduces it to savagery. But little detail is given. Therefore, what if anything to show as George watches millennia flash by? Pal's solution, as conceived, one would assume, by screenwriter David Duncan (but who knows whose idea it really was?), is to keep

**BOY MEETS ELOI:**  
Yvette Mimieux  
and Rod Taylor



animation, this last technique used to comic effect on a mannequin in a dress shop window across the street. By observing quick changes in fashion down through the years, George becomes aware of at least the cultural trends in the great stew of change bubbling mostly unseen around him. This conceit is economical in two ways. It eliminates the need for exposition ("I saw many changes in the passing years. The city metamorphosed around me..." and so forth) and saves the cost of a London set. It's shorthand, but it gets the job done. Besides, we here in 1960 know what's happening out there.

The First World War, for one thing, which George learns about the first time he

George literally in the dark, inside a cave of hardened lava formed by...wait a minute, this is starting to sound a little daffy...volcanic eruptions—I said volcanic eruptions which in turn are caused by...are you ready?...a nuclear war in 1966. Okay, I said it, and I'm glad. George stops his machine again just as an "atomic satellite" is coming down on London, bringing radioactive doom. He sees Philby's son again just before the thing hits, and barely manages to restart the machine before the mushroom cloud rises. The next thing we see is massive instantaneous volcanism. Again, I wish to point out that the setting is London, England. Nevertheless, pink, viscous lava pours out of fissures in

**CULT MOVIES**

the ground and runs gooly every which way, carrying along toy cars and model trains in its stream (the only point at which the budget looks threadbare), before burying George and his machine. But the machine is traveling through the fourth dimension and isn't really there, you see. Well, look. It's a plot solution, albeit one that does not really work very well.

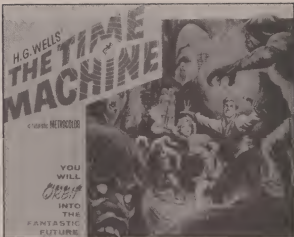
And George sits there in the dark for thousands of years until wind and rain wear the hardened lava away and sunlight spills in, and what we see now going on in the diorama of the ages is construction. Futuristic buildings rise and fall, cities spring up and disappear, and there is the general impression of an advanced civilization going on out there. Then things begin to slow and the buildings look a little run down. And that's all the indication we get of what went on for the last 8-million years.

(Make no mistake, as I sit there in 1960 watching all this, I don't bat an eye. I swallow it all, fully believing there could be a nuclear war in the distant year 1966. In fact I'm expecting one any day now. The Cuban missile crisis is only two years away. I don't know that, but nuclear war is a *continual* nightmare that my young self of 1960 must contend with. I have no problem with the volcanoes. I view them as the very LEAST that will happen when the proverbial balloon finally goes up.)

The machine stops rather abruptly, and George is thrown from it, passing out. He awakes to a world that at once resuscitates the sense of wonder that just got a sound thrashing over the last few minutes.

That distant future world is still with me. Any time I get a glimpse, off a road or freeway, of a particularly verdant and kempt expanse of ground, lush with vegetation yet having a park-like, manicured look (some golf courses do this for me), I am reminded of the greensward where the time machine finally comes to rest. On this timeswept pasture sits a strange and compelling structure. A sphinx, a stylized head, enigmatic and androgynous, mounted on an odd-shaped building. Huge bronze doors, tightly shut, front the puzzle-piece. What is this place? A cenotaph, a temple (no, too small), a shrine? It is none of those things. We find out eventually that its function is sinister in the extreme, but this does not alter its innate allure. I love the thing, and I want a copy of it in my back yard. To this day.

We pause here for political rumination, which, if one goes by the letter column of this magazine, is none-too-popular a chew in these parts. Some people do not like politics mixed with their film commentary. At least, some people do not like the slant of certain



political stripes. Certainly. But I merely want to point out that most cult movie aficionados know H.G. Wells to have been a socialist, and that this is the world of the Eloi and the Morlocks, the former remnants of a decadent ruling class, the latter a degenerate and monstrous mutation of the proletariat.

Talk about *echt*, the basics. Wells' world view was a brand of fundamentalist, foot-washing utopian socialism rarely seen today except in broadsides that litter college campuses. It is pretty primitive stuff. But it is all subtext, and the movie makes almost zero reference to the origins of the bifurcated social fabric. Barely a hint is given. Meanwhile back in 1960, the kids in the audience sit in wonderment, wads of gum fermenting under their butts, and outside the theater steel mills are already rusting away. If the year eight-hundred thousand and some ever comes, no one will have ever heard of a steel mill, where workers once sweated and died.

But thank God for sex, which still exists. There are still only two sexes (so much for transgenderism), and Weena, as played minimally by Yvette Mimieux, is about as sexy an Eloi as ever you could hope to meet.

Beneath the idyllic gardens of the Eloi lurk the Morlocks in their caves, dank holes that throb with a sound not unlike that of my grandmother's old wringer washer, curiously enough, which gives the sound effects track a homey ring for me. I'm thinking, the Morlocks take in laundry?

The Eloi are not exactly a robust people. The males are effeminate and dromish, the

females mere brooding stock. George reacts violently when a group of them sit idly by as Weena almost drowns. Again, he can't understand what's going on. The Eloi are brain dead. They sit and eat fruit in magnificent sheltered domes they don't even think of repairing. They speak in tautologies and non sequiturs; they care about nothing; they've dropped out. Today we begin to wonder if H.G. Wells survived into the late 1960s. He did not, but perhaps Pal had gotten a hint of the counterculture which would shortly appear on the horizon.

George asks to see books. The Internet must have finally done in the paper publishing industry, because such books as still exist crumble in George's fingers. The Eloi have something like computers, though, and George gets a decrepit one to work. Here Pal's prop designers show some imagination. The "speaking rings" are sound reproduction devices which, when spun on a table top, reproduce historical recordings. Curiously impractical, but charming. George listens to one that describes the aftermath of the last global conflict. The ring voice says the human race is through. George agrees.

He wants to leave the dismal future and go back to the time when men showed courage and did high deeds. Something like that. Anything's better than this lot. He returns to the sphinx, but is astonished to find his vehicle missing. Stolen. The tracks of its sleigh-like runners lead through the turf up to the enormous bronze doors. Obviously the Eloi are not the only inhabitants of this remote time.

# THE TIME MACHINE CONT'D.

It's a wonder he hasn't figured it out already. Where does the fruit come from, George? Obviously the result of advanced agriculture. Those are orchards, and the fruit is genetically engineered for size and fecundity. Who did it? Listen to those wringer washers. The Morlocks, remnants of the working class, run this world from their caverns, engineer the agriculture, and breed the Eloi for food.

You'll notice that I've said little about the actual production in the last few paragraphs. I've merely been recounting the basic story line. The film carries the viewer along, adroitly dodging improbabilities and smoothing awkward moments. This fluidity is due in part to Pal's conventional but solid directing. He's no Hitchcock, and certainly no Kubrick, but he does a journeyman's job. And he knows how to allocate his resources; although his working budget is lean, what production funds he has at his discretion are well spent.

As we watch, we forgive Pal everything. The Morlocks are aquamarine-skinned absurdities, cartoonish and bumbling, but who knows what monsters will look like at the end of time? The Eloi are blond and beautiful, but impossibly dumb. Surely there's enough human genetic material in them to prompt an occasional flash of ancient fire; they would at some point wake up to their desperate situation. And if the Morlocks can bioengineer human fruit genes, why can't they come up with clone steaks and pork chops? The Morlock preference for human

flesh is never explained (in both film AND novel). These blue-green, hairy creatures are portrayed as brutish for the express purpose of setting the stage with villains of the piece. Which George do we fault here, (Herbert G. for George) Wells, or George Pal? Neither, really, for we are along for the ride and enjoying it all the way.

If we have any cavils, they don't much matter. As George battles his way into the sphinx building — which by the way is a signaling device for the purpose of letting the Eloi know they're invited for dinner, so to speak — to rescue Weena and retrieve his machine, we watch, we acquiesce, we enjoy. This world is totally convincing in its strangeness, its grotesque distortions. George Pal's gift for good, if not brilliant, filmmaking has made it so. This future world might not be a likely descendent of ours, but it all the more bracing for its improbability. It's a future we almost cannot imagine. And that makes it a shock, an astonishing but fleeting look through the parting fogs that obscure our future. That's why the film works.

George escapes from the Morlocks without Weena. Here some divergence from the novel occurs. In Wells' original conception, the Time Traveler continues his trip forward into the time stream. He rushes into the farthest future, all the way to what Carl Sagan called "the last afternoon of earth," a world of swollen red sun on the verge of extinction. The Time Traveler — who, incidentally, is never named by the narrator — stands at the edge of world's end and sees only an amorphous black shape splashing in the dark waters of the last ocean. It is the bleakest of visions. Wells' pessimism was as deep-seated as it was systemic in his philosophy. All utopians are pessimists. They believe that man must be protected from the biggest danger, which is himself. No one who believes in human liberty can be a utopian, for liberty is perilous, and in the perfect society peril is contraband, along with tobacco, guns, and butter.

Pal doesn't need this part of the book. He's already made his point. The Eloi are pampered and cared for, but are not free, and with this loss of liberty comes a loss of humanity. They become fully human again when George prods them into action against their oppressors. The towering irony here is that the revolt of the Eloi is the counterrevolution, the smashing of the worker's state, a reactionary act. This interpretation would have unsettled Wells, but Pal does not shrink from it. In fact, the final liberation of the Eloi is only hinted at in the novel. Pal supplies the action that the audience demands.

Thus George Pal's vision is truer to Wells than Wells would be to himself. The film is not only enjoyable for its entertainment values, it is a tasty thought *hors-d'oeuvre*. I don't believe this can truly be said about any other Pal film. Since that Saturday afternoon in 1960, I haven't stopped thinking about Pal's adaptation of *The Time Machine*. I keep seeing that meadow off the road, out there in the mists of time. I search for the sphinx. The movie is with me to this day.

Wells' future was not all bleak; at the end of the film George returns to his group of friends, tells his story (most of the movie is a flashback), and then disappears into the future again, armed with only three books. His friends debate which books could found a new civilization.

The future looks bright after all. Hope, courage, and all things human are possible even in the twilight of the world. George Pal's ending eloquently illustrates the novel's last line:

"...Even when mind and strength had gone, gratitude and a mutual tenderness still lived on in the heart of Man." ■

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# ED WOOD'S

The sedan speeds around the corner and roars up to a halt in front of a gas station. Car doors burst open and a gang of wildcat women dash into the station, hold the terrified attendant at gunpoint while they fill their purses with money, and escape in their car as quickly as they arrived. So opens the thrill-a-second script of *Hellborn*, the unfinished masterpiece of Edward D. Wood, Jr.

# HELL



## About the Tape

...Cult Movies put *Hellborn* together with a short Ed Wood western, a short mystery film by Conrad Brooks, some interview footage I shot with Conrad speaking to actor Peter Coe (Ed Wood, evicted from his apartment on Yucca Street, lived with his friend Coe for a week, and died at Coe's house. (Film fans will remember Coe from *House of Frankenstein*, *The Mummy's Curse*, and other Universal classics.) Similarly and sadly, Peter Coe died a week after our videotaped interview with him. We present this final interview with Mr. Coe for historical purposes)....

## About Hellborn

...Ed Wood convinced exploitation producer George Weiss to finance a day of exterior filming for his crime epic. With Weiss' backing, Ed shot a sequence at a pizza parlor in the San Fernando Valley and a big fight scene between himself and Conrad Brooks. Weiss was unable to raise money for the rest of the film, so he sold the footage to Ed and Conrad, who then became partners in the venture. Eventually Conrad raised enough money to film several more days of shooting. This includes the above mentioned gas station heist, where Wood himself appears as one of the wild women in the holdup. "He wasn't supposed to be a guy in drag," assures Conrad. "He was just acting in a woman's getup to avoid having to pay another actress"....



# BORN



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# PETER•SELLERS THE•MOUSE•THAT•SOARED

by Jeffery Davis

It's hard to believe it's been over twenty years that we've been without Peter Sellers, who died of a heart attack in 1980. And yet his work continues to appear on late night television and home videos, a constant source of entertainment and an influence on contemporary comedians and filmmakers.

Proclaimed by many critics as "the screen's greatest comic actor," Sellers was equipped with a unique ability to mimic even the most difficult of dialects with the expertise of a genuine artist. But putting talent aside, what really separated Peter Sellers from other comedians-turned-actors was that he always managed to reveal some assured quality of personality that any audience could immediately respond to. Who could ever forget the gentle Tully Bascombe, who reluctantly leads an invading army to America in *The Mouse That Roared* (1959), or the shadowy Chas Quilty in *Lolita* (1962), or the cunning Pearly Gates in *The Wrong Side of the Law* (1963).

Eventually audiences came to hold these personalities in such affectionate regard that they were readily identifiable when Sellers first appeared on the screen. Unduplicated and unequalled, with the passage of time, his reputation and acclaim continued to grow.

Beginning always with the outward appearance (the clothes, the accent, the make-up) Sellers would mold himself into character and in his own inspired way would do it with the brilliance of a modified Sir Lawrence Olivier.

Having appeared on the British stage since the early years of childhood with his parents, he won a talent contest for acting at age thirteen for his series of comic impersonations. A trait he acquired from his mother, Peg

Mendoza, a song and dance performer.

Inducted at age seventeen into the Royal Air Force, he soon found himself assigned to special services as Camp Entertainer, where he performed in such populated areas of the world as India and Burma. Sellers returned to England after WWII with a new repertoire of impressionable disguises.

Although radio had initially provided the training ground for his genius of imitating voices, it was the BBC's television production of *The Goon Show* where he gained even more popularity. It was here that he formed an endless array of characterizations that he would eventually carry to movie audiences throughout the next two decades.

Peter Sellers began working in Hollywood as well as in the London Studios by the end of the 1950s, but it was still a time before he would evolve in status.

In *The Mouse That Roared*, his first popular film for American audiences, he provided comic and chaotic moments appearing in three roles he handled quite well, yet nothing of profound significance.

Of the two films Sellers made for Stanley Kubrick, *Lolita* (1962) and *Dr. Strangelove* (1964), it was the latter that ignited him to the ranks of international favor. Because of Kubrick's fondness for foreign accents and Sellers' enthusiasm for his three roles — each with very different personalities — *Dr. Strangelove* became a good showcase for the actor's talents and the film for which he was first nominated for a Best Actor Oscar.

A few years prior, no one could have predicted that this actor who provided three *Strangelove* characters (that of a bumbling, disconcerting President, and a stiff-upper-lip

British officer, and a demented scientist who dresses in black leather gloves, twists and turns about in his wheelchair) would ever take an entire nation by storm.

If *Dr. Strangelove* was considered an authentic oddity, Sellers didn't have too much to worry about after *The Pink Panther* (1964). For better or worse, the role of the bumbling French detective, Inspector Clouseau, is the one which bears a permanent emblem in the minds of Sellers fans.

Because of a performance delivered so brilliantly and perhaps overly convincingly, Sellers knew his talents could soon be reduced to a compendium of similar pitfalls, cheap slapstick and glib impersonations. On the flip side, Clouseau (a role originally intended for Peter Ustinov) provided Sellers with a rare opportunity to play a character both comic and pathetic. A living caricature of everything hilarious that both he and director Blake Edwards ever absorbed from the golden age of silent comedies and the Warner Brothers Looney Tunes.

Throughout the next five films of the series, the sometimes self-demeaning tomfoolery he invariably went through alienated him from the sophisticated fare he had become best known for at the start of his career. His likable loser in the Laurel and Hardy, Buster Keaton, and Harry Langdon tradition gave way to much more vulgar and repetitive presences.

After *A Shot In The Dark* (1965, the first and best of the sequels to the original *Panther* movie), Sellers appeared in such farces as *The World of Henry Orient*, *After the Fox*, *The Bobo*, and *The Magic Christian*. Although humorous at times, each was far from impressive, and gone was much of his spontaneous effervescence of years past.

Having been forced to resign from the 1964 production of *Kiss Me Stupid* due to symptoms of heart disease, Sellers' volatile, often eruptive personality off screen became most likely a factor of his ill fated health. With a reputation for insane jealousy, he was also paranoid and manic-depressive. He exhausted



Sellers (in British Officer mode) and Sterling Hayden in *Dr. Strangelove*

all wives and lovers and his sudden moods often provoked the temperaments of directors.

Despite the great fanfare that the *Pink Panther* films returned him to in the '70s, Peter Sellers sadly discovered there was no place else for him to go. After 1976, very few film offers came his way, and those that did were little more than variations of his beloved, unwieldy Inspector Clouseau. It appeared as if he had ceased to act altogether and that he was merely relying on his work in the *Pink Panther* series to get him through. In some ways, it seemed as if Sellers was right back where he started.

Fortunately near the end of his life came *Being There* (1979), for which he was nominated for his second Best Actor Oscar. For nearly six years Sellers had tried to persuade author Jerzy Kosinski to sell the film rights to his novel to director Hal Ashby. Considering the lead role an opportunity of a lifetime, he had initially lobbied with Kosinski for the part in 1972.

To get the feel for the character of the "mildly deficient" protagonist, "Chance" the gardener, Sellers tried out numerous walks and accents before finally settling on a voice that somewhat resembled that of film comedian Stan Laurel. Distinctively, he remained the character throughout the entire four months of filming. According to his wife Lynne Fredrick, he seemed to become the child-man for the duration even behind the camera. A crowning achievement in which he at last received the critical praise he had so long desired.

Although *Being There* takes a huge swipe at many of today's social norms, it was clearly Sellers all by himself who inverts the empathy of his audience in the well-meaning "Chance" and his viewpoints on the world as colored through his own limited experience. *Being There* pre-dated *Forrest Gump* by fifteen years, yet both films have been credited as whimsical images as seen through the eyes of one nondimensional character. What separates *Being There* is Peter Sellers whose constant thriving for conviction even provides the film's

final scene of "Chance" walking on water with a bit of plausibility.

Unlike many of his co-stars, Peter Sellers was an actor who in his own words existed on film as only a character and not as himself.

"There's no such person as Peter Sellers," he was often quoted as saying since 1959. "I don't really exist...I can't move...I can't talk. I'm really a very odd bod," thus perhaps prophesying his extraordinary identification with *Being There's* non-dimensional hero.

Had Peter Sellers been provided an opportunity much sooner to explore this wondrous new approach to gentle, comic pathos in other roles, there is no telling how much greater his contributions to the American Screen might have been. ■

Below: A *Doctor Strangelove* production still showing Sellers in President mode  
Bottom: Sellers in 1978's *Revenge of the Pink Panther*



# The Sasquatch Screen:

**B**igfoot has been a huge part of American pop culture and mythology for well over a century, so it's fitting that the large, shaggy, mysterious whatchamathingy of long-standing folkloric appeal and his equally famous Himalayan brethren the Abominable Snowman have been featured in both prominent and secondary roles in movies and TV shows for roughly 50 years.

Portrayals of Sasquatch vary from mean and scary to gentle and unthreatening. The films and TV shows likewise vary greatly in quality from good to bad to downright awful.

Hitting his peak of popularity in the '70s (thanks mainly to that decade's resurgence of interest in nature and ecology), and lately stereotyped as a softie in dreadful direct-to-video children's movies, Bigfoot remains a constant attraction throughout the years, regardless of whether he really exists. It's this latter element of eternally unsolved mystery which gives Bigfoot his uniquely compelling aura, a captivating air that's liable to continue as long as the human race retains even a residual curiosity in the bizarre and uncommon. What Bigfoot offers is a welcome release from the mundane, a pleasing departure from the dreary workaday reality all of us seem to be caught up in.

The better Bigfoot films convey some part of this built-in mythos, while the lesser ones merely exploit it for the sake of a quick, easy buck. So, without anymore speculative philosophizing, let's get our hiking boots on and boldly venture into the wild, far-ranging hinterland of Sasquatch Cinema.

1954's  
Snow  
Creature

1967's *Harry and the Hendersons*

## An Inexhaustibly Comprehensive Overview of Bigfoot Films

by Joe Wawrzyniak

CULT MOVIES

## FEATURE FILMS

### The Legend of Boggy Creek

Do-It-Yourself auteur Charles B. Pierce's engagingly unassuming pseudo-doc '72 effort *The Legend of Boggy Creek* was in many respects a prototypical '70s Sasquatch cinema outing. There's the small hillbilly hamlet setting, the colorfully drawn redneck characters, use of the dense backwoods to evoke a sense of eeriness and isolation, plain-spoken narration, and even the inclusion of a twangy, bitingly reflective country theme song. These elements have all been reused in numerous '70s Bigfoot films which were made in *Boggy Creek's* profitable wake.

Pierce's feature takes place in the humble farming community of Fouke, Louisiana. The toothless and wizened greaser menfolk—firmly perched in their rocking chairs—exude an earthy charm as they relate in their dry-throated drawls a series of tales centering on the massive three-toed forest-residing hairy humanoid creature. The creature initially seems shy and docile, but driven mad by agonizing loneliness (the picture scores extra points for its sympathetic portrait of the monster's pitiable, lonesome plight), it eventually becomes aggressive and threatening: the pesky varmint knocks over garbage cans, stalks rickety trailer hoppers back and forth, and in the movie's best cheap fright scene, literally scares the shit out of a guy by popping up at the poor scone's bathroom window (!).

The disarmingly homespun simplicity of Earl E. Smith's script gets right to the heart of the matter with a satisfyingly pretense-free directness. (Smith also penned the proto-slasher item *The Town That Dreaded Sundown* for Pierce and wrote and directed the outstanding horror Western *The Shadow of Chikara*.)

Pierce's sharply observant cinematography deftly utilizes gradual pans and slowly sweeping tracking shots to capture the natural spookiness and closed-off aura of the thick marshlands that serve as the creature's habitat (the images of gnarled bottle trees, gritty unpaved dirt roads, doublewides, and the forest's teeming array of scurrying wildlife possess a certain lurid boondoggle authenticity). Vernon Stearnman's folksy, amiable narration and the flavorful, harmonic score by prolific Southern-fried B-film composer Jamie (Redneck County, *Masculine*) Mendoza-Nava (who also supplied the music for another superior Sasquatch cinema outing, *Creature from Black Lake*) further enhance the flick's stiffly unaffected and absorbing downhome lyricism. Not surprisingly, *Boggy Creek* was a huge drive-in hit and was followed by two sequels.

### Return to Boggy Creek

The first *Boggy Creek* sequel was the charmingly pleasant and tenderhearted '77 children's movie *Return to Boggy Creek*, which is a follow-up to the '72 original in a strictly nominal sense.

Stories abound in a sleepy, self-contained fishing community of a supposedly vicious Bigfoot creature called "Big Bay Tri" that resides deep in the uninviting swamplands of Boggy Creek. Two bratty brothers and their older, more sensible tomboy sister (a sweetly feisty performance by cute, pig-tailed future *Different Strokes* sitcom star Dana Plato, who went on to hold up a convenience store to support her drug habit, belatedly come out of the closet as a lesbian, and finally commit suicide at the tragically young age of 37) go venturing into the treacherous marsh to check out if the creature of local legend may in fact be a real live being. The trio get hopelessly lost in a fierce storm and the furry, bear-like, hominoid Sasquatch, who turns out to be very gentle and benevolent, comes to the kids' rescue.

Tom Moore's casual, no-frills direction relates this simple tale at a leisurely pace, astutely capturing the workaday minutiae of the rural town in exact detail, drawing the assorted country characters with great warmth and affection, and thankfully developing the sentiment in an organic, restrained, unforced manner which never degenerates into sticky-sappy mush.

The adorable Dawn Wells, best known as Mary Ann on *Gilligan's Island* and who cameoed in Charles B. Pierce's *The Town That Dreaded Sundown* as a near victim, gives a plucky portrayal of the kids' loving, working-class single mom, while Jim Wilson and John Hoffer offer enjoyably insouciant support as a couple of squabbling, of haysed carmudgeonly cops.

Robert Bethard's capable, sunny cinematography displays the woody setting in all its surreptitiously tranquil, achingly pure and fragile untouched by civilization splendor. Darrell Deck's score adeptly blends flesh-crawling synthesizer shudders and jubilant banjo-plucked country blugrains into a tuneful sonic brew.

The film warrants special praise for the way it uncannily predicts the '90s kiddie pic Bigfoot film vogue by a good 15-odd years.

### Boggy Creek II

In 1983 Charles B. Pierce made a belated official sequel to his original regional smash. Alas, with the strictly middling *Boggy Creek II* (i.e., *The Barbaric Beast of Boggy Creek, Part II*), Pierce decided to drop the documentary pretense which gave the first flick its modestly engaging appeal and intimate immediacy, producing instead a wite and overkill horror-thriller stock plot concerning yet another overly curious college anthropology professor and three gang-bro students once again venturing into the murky, soggy backwoods to snag themselves a Bigfoot with the use of state-of-the-art computer tracking equipment.

After 70-odd minutes of barely tolerable tedious, the film finally comes to life in the third act when the professor and his students come across a mean, obese, ill-mannered evil hick (a nicely scummy bit by Jimmy Clem), who has abducted the creature's sickly young 'un. But this sequence happens far too late in the game to compensate for the dreariness which transpires beforehand.

To be fair, Pierce delivers a decent, competent performance as the friendly professor. Pierce's husky son, Chuck, is likable as one of the students, as are gorgeous brunettes Serene Hedin and good-looking stippled Cindy Butler.

Shirak Khajavyan's clear, sparkling cinematography looks mighty sweet, and the creature itself is an impressively sinewy, bestial, not-to-be-trifled-with 8-9, 300-lb behemoth. Unfortunately, *Boggy Creek II* is marred by Pierce's plodding direction, a deadeningly slow pace, a none-so-lively story, failure to utilize the Texarkana-area setting, strained attempts at humor (one guy gets a fright from Sasquatch while he's in the out-house), and a severe paucity of tension. This mediocre timekiller is a very dissatisfying final entry in the *Boggy Creek* trilogy.

### Creature From Black Lake

Now with all that *Boggy Creek* stuff out of the way, let's focus on my all-time favorite Sasquatch cinema outing.

*Creature from Black Lake* (a.k.a. *Demon of the Lake & Terror in the Swamp*) gets my vote as the most amiable and entertaining Bigfoot fright film to ever amble onto the big screen. John David Carson and the ever-daffy Dennis Fimple display a breezy, relaxed, mildly personable chemistry as two eager-beaver college anthropologist students who visit a Louisiana stick burg to find out if stories concerning Mr. "Size 25 Shoes" have any basis in fact.

Zealously directed by Do-It-Yourself regional filmmaker Joy Houck, Jr. and cleverly written by film mack Collopy, Jr. (who co-stars as a wily country boy who befriends our heroes), *Creature from Black Lake* boasts an endearingly playful sense of good-natured humor, likable characters, a fine spooky atmosphere, and a tasty, picturesque evocation of the Creole State's lush, marshy bayou.

Furthermore, the stellar, spot-on, spirited tearful-apart-the-scenery performances by dependable seasoned heshbones Jack Elam and Dub Taylor add a substantial energy boost to the proceedings. Taylor essays his standard role of a crusty, hot-tempered hillbilly grandpa with his trademark testy aplomb ("Dadgum 'n", but Elam steals the entire show with his growly, eye-rolling portrayal of omery of swamp scum trapper Joe Carson (Elam's "nuthin'" story in particular is an absolute corker). Sticky, story-faced character character thief Bill Thurman brings his usual low-key charm and unaffected acting style to the role of a sheriff named after then-Fist Brother (and national emblem) assassinate Prez Clinton's nitwit sibling, Roger) Billy Carter, who some of you might remember also had a beer named after him. Morgan Fairchild's comely sister Catherine McClelleny has a sexy small part as a finny greasy-soup waitress.

In a nifty homage to *Legend of Boggy Creek*, Fimple has the boy living fidd scard out of him when a guy catches him off guard while he's draining his dragon behind a bush.

The unusually adroit and sporadically expensive widescreen cinematography was done

by a fledgling Dean Cusney, who eventually established himself as a top director of photography with his ground-breaking gliding camerawork for *Halloween*. Jamie Mendoza-Navas score deftly alternates between moody, menacing scoreshadow music and sprightly, shit-kicking country bluegrass. (Fumble and Houck, he also acted in *The Shadow of Chikara*, which Mendoza-Navas composed the music for.)

The film concludes with a genuinely hair-raising sequence in which Sasquatch (Roy Tatum in an up-to-snuff excess body hair outfit) stalks and attacks our protagonists. All in all, this dandy's a complete winner.

## The Capture of Bigfoot

Bill Rebane's *The Capture of Bigfoot* provides loads of good'n'gritty postfall fun.

A pair of no-account crackers are savagely killed by Bigfoot after they abduct the huge fellow's young 'un. A slimy businessman wants to snare the full-size galoot so he can rake in the dough puts a hefty bounty on Bigfoot's head. A bunch of hillbilly hunters, eager to collect the plentiful reward money, venture into the woods to nab him.

It's clear that this feature was a true labor of love—budget love for Wisconsin-based Do-It-Yourself auteur Rebane, who directed, but produced, co-wrote the script, and co-edited. Additionally, the director cast his son Randolph as the baby Bigfoot! (And Rebane later made a sort of return to Sasquatch cinema with the enjoyably tacky *Rama: The Legend of Shadow Lake*, which centers on an amphibious humanoid frogman creature of Native American myth who guards over a cache of gold located at the bottom of a murky marshland lake.)

Actually, truth be told, Rebane does a pretty skillful job in every department: the performances are acceptable, the pace quick and steady, the photography proficient, the jazzed-up '70s TV cop show-style score seriously smokes, the philosophical country theme song likewise kicks, the wintry landscapes look lovely, a fair amount of tension is capably developed, the Sasquatch attack scenes are staged with vigor, and there's even a nice dash of savory local folklore (the creatures are described as the "Legend of Aumak").

Hock, the sterling B-pic cast alone earns this pup a passing mark. There's the ubiquitous exploitation movie duo of John Goff and George "Buck" Flower (*Wilderness Family* film regular Buck seems more grizzled than usual because of his thick, bushy, gray-streaked beard, and frequent screenwriter Goff penned some additional dialogue for this honey). And there's also:

\*Stafford (*The Zebra Force*, *The Forest*) Morgan  
\*Blood Beach's Otis Young

\*Richard Kennedy (he was partnered with Buck in both the historically vulgar exploitation blast *The Candy Zanyman* and the top-rate female psycho pic *The Witch Who Came from the Sea*)

\*And Buck's sweetly plump daughter Verkina.

The Bigfoot family, who more closely resemble yetis with their bright white fur, teeth,

and claws, are a reliable source of unintentional laughs, for they prove to be even more flit, clumsy, and lumbering than George "Buck" Flower.

## McCullough's Mountain

While on the subject of fun Bigfoot flicks, we gotta single out Massey Cramer's refreshingly playful and tongue-in-cheek '65 redneck romp *McCullough's Mountain* (a.k.a. *Devon Frontier*, *Blood Beast of Monster Mountain*, & *Legend of Blood Mountain*) for appraisal.

It's part fact, part fiction, and all enjoyable in its pleasingly facetious telling of a legendary backwoods Bigfoot who periodically pops up in the Georgia forest around an equally mythical mountain to scare the hell out of the local yokels. Klatzy middle-aged newspaper copy boy Dooley (winningly portrayed by George Ellis), eager to nail the scoop, goes venturing up into the hills to find out if stories about Mr. Out-of-Control Body Odoe have any basis in truth.

Director Cramer displays a light, frothy touch throughout (Cramer later co-wrote and produced the okay '74 dope deal opus *The Florida Connection*). Joseph Shelton's sometimes sharp cinematography offers some eye-catching visuals of the eerily calm lakes and woods, plus several creepy shots of the creature prowling around the dense, fog-shrouded forest. Spooky atmosphere is effectively developed and the monster attack scenes are treated with a goodly amount of punch.

Former magician, carnival man, '60s soft-core feature writer/director/producer, and all-around extraordinary cinematic jack-of-all-trades exploitation huckster par excellence Donn Davison (who's billed here as a "world traveler, lecturer, and psychic investigator"), clearly shot inserts for this little killer-diller. They were probably done for a belated early '70s release in order to cash in on the then scorching hot Bigfoot craze, and Davison makes for a wryly entertaining host as he cites facts about Bigfoot which include the oft-mentioned Teddy Roosevelt incident — commonly related in these things for a sense of historical legitimacy — and conducts droll interviews with wide-eyed folks who've had scary run-ins with the beast ("Is this gonna be on television?," one awestruck gal asks Davison at the end of her interview).

Tim York's folksy, tuneful, twangy country theme song "The Ballad of McCullough's Mountain" smokes in no uncertain terms ("Some say he breathed fire like a dragon/Some say a giant ape with a human soul").

Okay, so *McCullough's Mountain* is no masterpiece, but as far as Sasquatch cinema movies go it's above average.

## The Curse of Bigfoot

Representing the ugly, filthy, unwashed and end of the Sasquatch cinema family tree, the dreadful direct-to-TV hodgepodge *The Curse of Bigfoot* profoundly reeks more than the allegedly malodorous mythical monster.

A little boy and his yippy dog are attacked by Bigfoot in the opening scene; this occurrence

is never tied in with the rest of the flick. Next a pompous high school science teacher gives an interminable lecture about the origins and discovery of Bigfoot to his understandably disinterested class. An intersex guy shows up to relate a grim story about his own nasty run-in with Sasquatch.

Several years ago the intersex guy was a high school teacher who, with a co-ed student quiet in tow, ventured into the wilderness to check out an ancient Indian burial ground. The expedition finds a mountain and climbs it. They uncover Sasquatch's secret subterranean tomb. They enter the tomb and run across a perfectly preserved mummified corpse. They remove the corpse, which turns out to be Bigfoot (!), from the tomb. Bigfoot awakes from his centuries of sleep and goes on the expected rampage. (A somewhat Bigfoot-like 30-foot ape-man beast also runs amok in *Equisox*, an awestringly bizarre and commendably ambitious early '70s sci-horror hybrid which bears a striking similarity to *The Curse of Bigfoot* and several other Sasquatch cinema affairs wherein a cluster of college students pump smack dab into Bigfoot during a woodland expedition.)

Man, is this patchwork muddle one beat movie. Don Fields' static direction saps any vibrance and enjoyment from the feature, the performances are terribly wooden, the pace nonexistent, the narration annoying (Bigfoot is described as "a monster of evolution"), the story uses a confusing, disjointed flashback-ridder structure with mind-deadening results (*Night of the Demon* also utilizes a class field-trip premise and a flashback-laden structure in an equally unsuccessful manner), the cinematography offers a wealth of appalling mismatches with its piss-poor insignifying of footage shot in the late '50s and early '70s (this aspect of the pic uncannily echoes both *Half Human* and *Imitation of the Animal People*), the cornball howling score sounds like it was lifted from a Gracie-Z '50s creature feature (which in fact it was, along with the whole flashback segment, all of which belong to the deservedly forgotten loser *Teenagers Beware the Thing*), the faded color film stock is sheer torture on the eyes, a stupefying surplus of extraneous filler abounds, and Bigfoot is a real letdown — he's some heavy-stepping schmuck in a ragged bush-league hairsuit with a pop-eyed, inexpressive paper mask fright mask on his face! Overall, it's accursed bilge.

## Bigfoot

Sure, *The Curse of Bigfoot* is one irredeemably rank pic, but it still ain't half as putrid as the so-dumb-it's-numbing late '60s grounder *Bigfoot*, which holds the dubious honor of being possibly the first-ever full-fledged Sasquatch pic.

This time it's a small tribe of Sasquatches — one giant bad-as male, three babbling females, and a homely, noisy "hybrid" whatadefuckit?-type baby bugger — who abduct hirsute human babes for procreative purposes.

Everybody involved with this turkey comes out stinking worse than a flesh, steaming pile of the proverbial horseshit Bigfoot leaves behind a tree.

Bouncy, bawdy blonde bombshell Jol Lansing, clad only in a skimpy pink nightgown, shrieking through the woods with a horny, grunting Bigfoot in hot pursuit. Robert Mitzum's no-talent son, Chris, trying to look tough with his scruffy beard and bandana, makes for an unconvincing biker hero. John Carradine, sporting a hideously overdrawn Southern drawl and a juicy hamminess that could be made into a dozen cans of Spam, gives an unrestrained performance in his third, final, and single most embarrassingly woeful Sasquatch cinema outing as traveling salesman Jasper B. Hawke, who wants to nab himself a Bigfoot so he can make a bundle exploiting the critter to the ninth degree. Robert Mitzum's other no-talent son, John, gnats on the nerves with his insufferably whiny turn as Carradine's sniveling partner. Former cowboy movie star Ken Maynard came out of retirement to do a useless bit part as an elderly shopkeeper. Comic actor (and Rosanna Arquette's dad!) Doodles Weaver briefly appears as a forest ranger. Such familiar B-movie faces as William Bonner, Jennifer Bishop, and Russ Meyer starlet Haji (the latter having a very bad overbleached blonde bouffant 'do day) pop up as members of a sickeningly candy-ass biker gang.

The Bigfoot creatures are stupendously sorry-looking. With their tatty, you-can-see-the-seams brown gorilla costumes, buggy eyes, and rubbery, puffed-out monkey faces, they resemble rejects from a fifth-rate carnival freakshow.

There's little action, nudity, violence, or excitement to speak of (at one point Bigfoot wrestles a fat, out-of-it bear, but even this scene is so maladroldly staged that it fails to alleviate the incessant tedium). But there's plenty of dreadful dialogue ("As a former student of archeology I recognize these markings as having a peculiar significance").

Among the other malevolent cinematic blunders to be found within this beyond-bad Bigfoot boggery are the stubbornly stationary cinematography, a hopelessly dated "groovy" pseudo-psychedelic rock score, and lest and definitely least, Robert F. Slaten's so-called "direction."

## Search for the Beast

Sasquatch spent most of the '90s toiling in lame-n'bame children's movies, which makes the recent regional horror/exploitation hybrid *Search for the Beast* a definite anomaly, but still nothing to get all excited about.

In the misty backwoods of the Okaloosa Wilderness in Anniston, Alabama, a local Sasquatch creature murders the son of all-powerful rich douchebag Milton St. John (poorly played by bonafide exploitation legend David F. Friedman). St. John bankrolls an expedition lead by insipid nice guy Dr. David Stone (semi-sentient walking spam chunk Rick Montana) in a stupendously suck-ass non-performance) to find the fiend. Unbeknownst to Stone, the other members of the team are a bunch of stereotypically gung-ho, trigger-happy yahoos specifically bled by St. John to snuff the monster.

## Has a 150 Year Old Legend Come True? "The greatest monster since 'KING KONG'"

THE POST



Starring: John Carradine • Jol Lansing • John Mitzum  
Chris Mitzum • Jay Wilkerson • Lindsay Crosby • Ken Maynard  
Produced By: Anthony Cardozo Directed By: Robert Slaten

## Terror in the Swamp

R.G. Arledge's lax direction strikes out in every conceivable department, thereby sinking this leaden bomb to an unforgivably schlock-old sub-basement level of clueless "we're just screwin' round with a camera 'cause we ain't got nuthin' better to do" amateurishness.

Leaving a real shakedown to be desired are the unpeppy pacing, patrid acting, thinner-than-Ally McBeal characters, ill-judged stabs at lowbrow humor, the huge letdown creature (it's some weighty-trudgin' zhibu in a rubber ghou mask and black gorilla costume), off-screen killings, and the sudden/nonsense ending.

Those looking for a fun, worthwhile Bigfoot fright film are strongly advised to search elsewhere.

Speaking of lame Bigfoot flicks, there's no way we can avoid spitting out some mean invective at the expense of the semi-Sasquatch stinkeroo *Terror in the Swamp* (a.k.a. *Nutcracker: The Copazow Creature*). It's undoubtedly one of the all-time worst "cheap rubber monster on the loose" fright flicks to crawl out of the bayou and onto celluloid.

The tripe story deals with your standard bunch of unethical scientists who inject a nutria (swamp vermin that's basically a cuddly rat) with human hormones, which results in a murderous mutant man-eat-beastie (actually, it's just some luckless chump in a shabby fur-covered creature suit). The thing goes on a killin' spree, butchering assorted moonshiners, hillbilly hunters, and med-

dislose government folk around Poacher's Cove in Hosena, Louisiana like it was open season on stupid people. Pretty soon a bunch of redneck sportsmen and a crack team of Nara vets go venturing into the murky, pungent backwoods with guns cocked and tempers a ragin', eager to bag a mislabeled Bigfoot/creaky humanoid fiend.

Sound good, pindrop? Well, good it sure ain't. Though Joe Calesano's all-thumbs direction, the wooden acting by a no-name cast (Who the fuck is Billy Holliday?), the connect-the-dots plot, the army of one-note cardboard characters (Claudia Woods is especially irritating as nutty of swamp hag, Sally), and general air of ineptitude make this a modestly entertaining no-brainer good of boy creature feature all the same. Hell, it would make a nice triple bill with the equally inadequate, albeit oddly likable \$1.75 rubbery-monster-on-the-prowl howlers *Track of the Moonbeast* and *Spawns of the Slithis*.

## Night of the Demon

The best of the oddball Bigfoot endeavors is the marvelously tasteless and hyper-gory splatterfest *Night of the Demon*. The film compensates for what it lacks in pacing, acting, writing, direction (the mess of a story unfolds in an awkward, confusing flashbacks-inside-of-flashbacks elliptical manner) with a toning surplus of outrageous nubar touches, hideously graphic gore set pieces, and good ol' fashioned bottom-of-the-barrel grindhouse exploitation bawdiness.

A dippy college professor and an entourage of students go trekking into the North American wilderness to confirm local stories about a girl who allegedly got knocked up by Bigfoot and had his half-man, half-beast child. Well, these jokers sure stumble across more than they bargained for, with the Sasquatch in question turning out to be a lethal shaggy animal who most definitely does not like strangers poking around his neck of the woods.

Director Jim Wesson pours on the nauseating glue by the gleeful backdoorful:

\*One hapless hick has his arm torn right out of its socket (the stump bleeds all over the ground during the opening credits)

\*Two horny teens humping in a van are rudely disrupted by Bigfoot, who proceeds to paint the van's windshield a saucy red with the libidinous guy's blood

\*Two girl scouts accidentally stab each other in death

\*Intestines are yanked out and waved in the air

\*A man dozing in a sleeping bag is impaled upside down on a tree branch

\*The professor's face gets severely burned up after he's pressed against a hot stove

Almost as bent as the ghastly violence are a few first-class fruiting flourishes, such as the backwoods devil cult which worships a giant wooden statue of the misanthropic monster, and the gloriously repellent moment when Bigfoot impregnates a sweet 16-year-old, plus both patri-cide and infanticide occurring within the very same movie! No doubt about it, this choice chunk of cinema sickness is a warped blast.

## Demonwarp

Sasquatch splatter schlock takes a turn for the seriously stupid with the unbelievably idiotic direct-to-video sci-fi/horror hoot *Demonwarp*.

Once again a gaggle of bonehead kids go venturing into the forest — this time a place called Demon Wood — looking for Bigfoot. Well, these immature collegiate dolts find Bigfoot all right. He's one mean-as-a-bloodthirsty beastard with a nasty propensity for tearing off heads and spearing folks in the stomach with a tree branch.

In a surprise twist ending (that's directly swiped from the *Six Million Dollar Man* TV series), Bigfoot ultimately gets exposed as a front for a nefarious extraterrestrial with a fondness for devouring human hearts (!) and with the magical ability to reanimate the freshly butchered so it can use the zombies as slave labor (!!).

As one character brilliantly deduces early in the supremely asinine action, "Hey man, there's weird shit in these woods! Do you know what I mean?" No kiddin' dude.

And that ain't all this dilly has to offer. Why, there's also the sorry sight of a rotund, trapped-in-a-dismal-carer-slump George Kennedy grumbling his way through the demeaning part of a crusty old father out to bag Bigfoot because it murdered his daughter. Moreover, three luscious ladies dutifully doff their duds in the name of low-grade exploitation: Pamela Gilbert does her boyfriends, Colleen McDermott takes a gratuitous shower, and Michelle Bauer shakes her top so she can get a perfect tan. The surrealistic dialogue includes such gems as "Come on you six foot fiendbag!".

## ANTHOLOGIES

Given Sasquatch's longstanding popularity in horror films, it comes as no surprise to note that our of hairy and scary backwoods hermit has appeared in the occasional multi-storied anthology fright film.

Sasquatch first popped up in the hugely unimpressive drive-in omnibus shocker *Screams of A Winter Night*, in which a small white furry creature called "The Moss Point Man" attacks two motorists stranded in the middle of nowhere when their cars break down.

Bigfoot next went upscale and got himself a respectable name studio, mid-budget, major theatrical feature makeover courtesy of the dynamic horror picture duo of Stephen King and George A. Romero, materializing in "The Crate" episode of the ghostly entertaining *Crepuscle* as a fanged, clawed, unadorned beastie to whom hen-pedded hobbie Hal Holbrook feeds his boozy, bitchy biter half Adrienne Barbeau ("Just tell it to call you Billy," Holbrook cackles as the creature graphically shreds the wholly deserving Barbeau).

And a sanguinary clan of Bigfootish nocturnal instant cannibals terrorize a young newlywed couple who pick the wrong neck of the woods to park their camper in the first spooky story of

the way bitchin' direct-to-video chiller *Campfire Tales*.

## DOCUMENTARIES

### The Legend of Bigfoot

As I said earlier, *The Legend of Boggy Creek's* meteoric success led to two sequels. It also naturally beget a flood of like-minded documentaries all striving to not only provide photographic evidence of the ever-elusive creature's existence, but also to bilk bucks out of innumerable drive-in movie theater patrons' wallets. *The Legend of Bigfoot* is such a cash-in, right down its title, which suspiciously echoes *Boggy Creek's* moniker.

Actually, this earnest and engrossing effort manages to be enjoyable due mostly to the delightfully rough, tough, and oh-so-gruff rugged outdoorsman presence of one Ivan Marx. Marx, a hunter, trapper, tracker, and all-around man's man in excoats, embarks on a vigorous, determined, unflinching cross-country pilgrimage to track down and confirm the veracity of that much beloved sylvan beastman of longstanding myths. Marx travels America — from the Oregon coast to the Colorado Rocky Mountains — to Sasquatch's mating grounds in the Arctic Circle.

It's Marx's clearly honest and unforged commitment to finding Bigfoot which gives this feature a significant lift. A pleasure to hear are Marx's crazy, say-it-like-you-see-it musings on mankind's intrusion on nature, his disdain towards shyster businessmen's crass commercial exploiting of Bigfoot, occasional self-deprecating remarks ("Here I am a grown man rumm' around the woods chasin' after some fairytale"), cynicism concerning the so-called experts' offensive arrogance, and brilliant deductive observations about Bigfoot's migratory nature based on the behavior of other animals.

Moreover, Marx's delving into Native American folklore concerning Mr. Overized Prowlers — other Indian names for of high-tailers include the Oh-Man, Bushman, and Stickman — is interesting and informative.

The Grade-A cinematography nails the breathtaking beauty of the North American wilderness with stunning clarity and precision. Henry Stuart Winer's brisk direction, a script which provides a winningly sincere blend of skepticism and speculation, and Don (The Hills Have Eyes, The Prey) Peake's litingly melodic course round off the goodies to be found in this infectiously full-blooded ode to a faded, rapidly disappearing, adventurous "let's get that sumbitch"-style frontier spirit.

### In The Shadow of Bigfoot

Ivan Marx made a welcome return to Sasquatch cinema some 10-odd years later with the equally on-target and entertaining *In The Shadow of Bigfoot*. While bereft of *Legend's* gloriously gonzo gusto, this one still gets by on the virtue of its up-front sincerity and serious, no-foolin' tone. Ivan is his lovely craggy and rough-hewn self —

(PULP MOVIES)

a tad more low-key and mellow, but as resolute ("Survival is the name of the game") as before.

Once again Marc embarks on a lively all-over-America jaunt to unearth every last fact and shred of evidence he can uncover about Bigfoot, a cunning creature with thick, coarse hair and a large, dome-shaped head whom Ivan holds in high regard.

The info Ivan digs up is pretty damn intriguing:

\*Sasquatch was first noticed by pawn handlers during the Gold Rush

\*Bigfoot's origins are traced back to Tibet

\*One can easily track Bigfoot by keeping a keen eye open for his fecal droppings and marks he leaves on trees

\*Eskimos in Alaska believe poor Bigfoot casts no shadow because he wants to ward off hunters

\*And Bigfoot can be found in such far-reaching places as Oregon, Alaska, California, Louisiana, and Florida (where he's known in the bayou area as Skunk Ape due to his musky, pungent smell).

C. Thomas Biscardi's crisp direction retains a tight focus and we're-not-joking-around attitude throughout. The swift pace rarely lets up. Philip "Ramblin' Jack" Moulthrop provides a terrifically tuneful, softly lulling country-folk score. Marc's adroit cinematography conveys a dazzling array of breathtakingly beautiful nature scenery, with Ivan's first blood-freezing encounter with a Bigfoot which he had to shoot and wound in self-defense making for a particularly stand-out sequence. All in all, this darling's a 100% on-the-money outing.

## Bigfoot: Man or Beast?

Next we have perhaps the greatest Bigfoot speculative documentary ever made, *Bigfoot: Man or Beast?* It's the greatest for one simple reason: Bob Morgan's in it, dude! Morgan's essentially the whole show – and what a helluva show it is!

Morgan qualifies as my all-time favorite hardcore Sasquatch fanatic. Bob's enormous, hot-blooded, blue-veins-a-bulging boner for Bigfoot would do John Holmes proud. His madly aggressive and tirelessly determined presence positively energizes the screen. Unworried about the scorn or ridicule his obsessive Bigfoot search may elicit from disbelievers, Morgan's gang-bo attitude concerning the irrefutable proving of Bigfoot's existence (Bob's kick-ass motto about his relentless Bigfoot quest: "What the hell's worth doing in this world if it doesn't have a prize to pry") is a testament to sheer iron will and a yardstick by which all other aspiring mighty macho men should be measured.

Bob's recollection of his first Sasquatch

sighting in March, 1957 is truly killer: Morgan describes Bigfoot as "the most man-like human gorilla I have ever seen" and vividly remembers that Mr. Go To The Harbor and Get A Haircut Pronto Pal "had a knowing look as his eyes." Morgan whips himself up into a borderline psychotic angry rage when discussing the scientific community's dismissal of Bigfoot as a hoax, stating with righteous fury that Bigfoot does indeed exist and he's just the man to produce the hard, concrete evidence.

Accompanied by a motley bunch of hardy souls and an irritatingly incessant cornball

humming harmonica and pluckin' banjo country music sound byte, Morgan, a self-confessed "tough, hard-driving man," beaves scaring heat and the perilous Washington woods (Morgan admits the danger factor plays a substantial role in making the trek so alluring) to track down a Bigfoot family. You see, Bob has a tremendous respect for Sasquatch because he lives "beautifully with nature" and thinks that perhaps we weakling

humans could learn from Bigfoot's harmonious-with-the-elements lifestyle.

Sadly, all does not go well. Morgan bruises his ribs after taking a nasty fall. But he plugs ahead at a feverishly accelerated rate, noting that "time is our greatest enemy." Mother Nature further pisses on Bob Morgan's parade by starting a forest fire, thereby completely ruining his chances of uncovering Bigfoot on this expedition. Morgan's heretofore imperturbable machismo cracks; he breaks down, cries, and hugs other equally grief-stricken team members. What drama! What pathos! What emotion! What a crushing real-life bummer of an ending! If there ever was a film which needed – fuck that, goddamn demands – a sequel, it would have to be *Bigfoot: Man or Beast?*. I wanna see Bob chasing Bigfoot all over

the country and eventually all over the world. I don't know about you, but I personally think a series of films detailing Morgan's nonstop pursuit of Bigfoot would beat all those shit-ass cruddy James Bond/*Star Trek*/*Star Wars*/*Lethal Weapon*/whatever-the-fuck-else-other-long-dead-but-somewhat-still-going cinematic juggernauts.

## Sasquatch: The Legend of Bigfoot

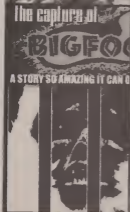
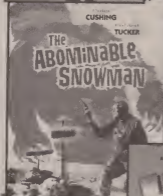
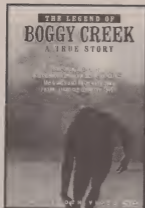
For sheer manic, pumpin', anything-for-a-chep-sensationalistic-jolt supermarket tabloid style thrills, it's mighty tough to top the delectably hokey *Sasquatch: The Legend of Bigfoot* (i.e. a *Sasquatch*). Once again your customary motley assortment of instantly recognizable man archetypes – calmly rational leader, rugged rancher, nerdy anthropologist, crotchety mountain man, slobby cook, noble Native American guy, and a radical skeptic jerkwhead reporter – venture into the mountainous Oregon wilderness searching for the eternally elusive, but forever altering Bigfoot.

Griested, the bromidic premise sounds unpromising and the inclusion of the Patterson film is gratuitously unnecessary, but what this beast lacks in originality it makes amends for with its galvanizingly sparky and enthusiastic execution. Director Ed Rapozzini infuses the pic with a crackling sense of urgency, stoking the flick with a joyfully junky vibrance (the poor in particular hoots along at a jumpy, pildriving clip) that's strangely irresistible.

Ed Hawkins' bold, unapologetically gut-terbag knock 'em dead in the aisles script likewise bristles with the same cheeky, dynamic, let's give the audience their grubby

money's worth yellow journalism sensibility. The interplay between the expedition members is quite arresting: the mountain man's hearty tall tales and the reporter's cynicism upsetting group morale are especially entralling. George Laurin's floridly dramatic narration, the whooshing, hyperactive cinematography

A leaping Bigfoot clan ambushes John Carnadie & co. in Bigfoot



(dig those crazily lurching POV shots of Mr. Get a Bottle of Nair Already on the prowl), the nifty, harmonic country theme song "High in the Mountains," a jarring grizzly bear attack scene, the white knuckle Bigfoot demolishes the group's camp grand finale, and Al Capp's furiously bombastic, barnstorming orchestral score contribute immeasurably to the schlocky merriment. While it doesn't score points for either restraint or subtlety, *Sasquatch* in its own blithely low-end National Enquirer way still delivers lotsa stomps-as-it-trashes pseudo-doc fun.

## The Hunt for Bigfoot

The Bigfoot boredom continues with the hour long mini-feature documentary snoots *The Hunt for Bigfoot*. Leadenly written, produced, and directed by Jim McCullough, this drawn-out talkathon centers on the legendary Fouke monster that's said to reside in the swampy marshlands of Fouke, Arkansas. A weary, croaky-voiced Cha Gulager, looking mighty silly in a hunting costume get-up which includes a floppy cap, bulky coat, and even a camera and binoculars (!), handles the hosting chores with a dismaying lack of enthusiasm.

The quiet, remote backwater hamlet holds an annual Fouke Monster festival and a local grocery store called Monster Mart sells t-shirts and various memorabilia relating to the creature.

The interviews with drawling yokel residents who claim to have seen the beast are far too verbose and meandering (one folksy lady proudly relates how she likes to feed the gentle creature freshly picked pears!), while the testimony by several no-name experts fails to convince. Only Dr. David Otto offers any fresh insights on America's constant fascination with Sasquatch, astutely pointing out that the savage, unnamed outcast creature represents the repressed wild animalistic side buried deep within the human soul that forces mankind to question both who and what he is as an individual being.

The dramatic recreations of alleged Bigfoot sightings are staged without flair or vigor. The sole piece of concrete evidence produced to prove the beast's existence is a moldy, long-limbed skeleton which makes the unsightly bag of slimy bones in *The Creeper: Flesh* look almost pretty in comparison. The skeleton gets examined by a coroner and a scientific team who both deduce that it's neither human nor any other living thing that they can identify. A taxidermist also throws his two cents into the ring, claiming that he never saw anything like it. Which still doesn't prove that it's the remains of a deceased Bigfoot.

The token source of relief provided herein are a few letterboxed (!) clips from *Creature from Black Lake*. Besides that unexpected treat, this one's strictly dead in the water.

## Sasquatch: The Evidence Mounts

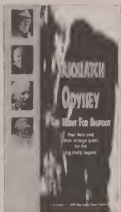
In 1995 Ohio-based Don Keating, who's either the poor man's Robert Morgan or the Roger Patterson of hopelessly amateurish Comco

crud (I'll let readers decide which unfavorable description they prefer best), produced one of three horrendous shot-on-video documentaries about Bigfoot. In the *Shadow of Bigfoot* got unleashed on an unsuspecting world first, followed by *Ohio's Abominable Snowman* and *Sasquatch: The Evidence Mounts*. I've only seen the latter pic and if it's emblematic of Keating's overall body of work, then the guy is most definitely a hideously all-thumbs "point the camera and pray we get the shot right" clueless ham-fisted hack.

Keating, a plain, balding, pudgy middle-aged stiff with all the charisma of a dead squirrel, hosts this drippy drick in a painfully inept fashion: he stutters and stumbles over sentences, mispronounces words, and talks incessantly without ever getting straight to the goddamn point. The eyewitness interviews are similarly shoddy, with a stationary camera going in and out of focus, faint, tinny sound, and an interviewer who appears excruciatingly ill at ease.

The interview subjects are likewise visibly uncomfortable and difficult to watch. Their testimonies are vague, awkward, and meandering. Two watched videos which allegedly feature Sasquatch in them are shown. One is so far off in the distance that it could very well be a bear; the other shows a blurry, hard-to-make-out brown creature behind a bunch of trees. Neither film is persuasive. There's also a scratchy, stammering recording of an excited 15-year-old boy's telephone call concerning a Sasquatch sighting and shots of large footprints in the Ohio backwoods.

The staccato, unmitigated threadbare production values are on par with the most shaky wedding videos photographed by your favorite drunken uncle while he was blitzed on cheap wine. It's the total dregs.



## Sasquatch Odyssey: The Hunt for Bigfoot

Without a doubt the best recent documentary on

Bigfoot has got to be the winningly whimsical, but still respectful and illuminating made-for-Canadian-TV 70 minute feature *Sasquatch Odyssey: The Hunt for Bigfoot*.

Director/coo-screenwriter Peter von Puttkamer doesn't center on Sasquatch so much as he does a quartet of men who've dedicated their lives to the study, capture, documentation of Bigfoot's existence. Dubbed "The Four Horsemen of Sasquatchery," the motley assortment of elderly gents are:

- \*Studiously academic physical anthropologist Grover Krantz
- \*Suave Irish adventurer Peter Byrne
- \*Sly, soft-spoken rugged outdoorsman Peter Green
- \*And crotchety Swiss writer Rene Dahinden.

Puttkamer's colorful profiles of these reigning Sasquatch experts offers a telling and entertaining glimpse at the uniquely obsessive mindset of the dyed-in-the-wool Bigfoot true believer.

Krantz, who was initially a skeptic when he first became seriously involved with investigating Sasquatch, has been fiercely ridiculed for his belief in Bigfoot and is considered a pariah within the scientific community, produced many strong theories concerning the veracity of Bigfoot's existence, and has become extremely hidebound, hardened, and tenacious with the passage of time, qualifies as the most scholarly and professorial of Bigfoot fanatics. The immaculately cultured, composed, and extroverted bon vivant Byrne rates as the Errol Flynn of the bunch, while the quiet, reserved Green comes across as the average garden variety everyman who somehow got tangled up in some incredibly nutty business-type guy of the group. And then there's the delightfully cantankerous Dahinden, whose salty tongue (he says "goddamn" a lot), easily set off temper, and zero tolerance for snooty amateurs and stuffy bookworm factoids single him out as the king crab-ness curmudgeon of Sasquatch trackers (Dahinden is further blessed with an impish sense of humor, as proven by a commercial he did for Kokanee beer featuring Bigfoot. Kokanee have done several other ads with Sasquatch in them. And, yes Virginia, there's a brew called Bigfoot Beer!). Of course, these geriatric men are all former close friends turned bitter adversaries who constantly argue and nitpick over such issues as whether Bigfoot is a man or an ape, the living missing link, and whether it's preferable to catch a Bigfoot alive or dead. Graced with the kick-ass country and western novelty theme song "Bigfoot Lives" and choice clips from trashy two-bit Sasquatch exploitation pictures (which include Bill Rebane's *The Capture of Bigfoot*), *Sasquatch Odyssey: The Hunt for Bigfoot* rates as a refreshingly wry and frivolous addition to the usually gravely sober Bigfoot documentary branch of Sasquatch cinema.

## The Mysterious Monsters

After making a quasi-Sasquatch cinema outing entitled *Bloodwalkers*, filmmaker Bigfoot hunter Robert W. Morgan's second addition to Sasquatch Cinema is a backwoods varmint of

an altogether more pallid and underwhelming bae. It's the quasi-documentary *The Mysterious Monsters* (a.k.a. *Bigfoot: The Mysterious Monster*).

Unfortunately, the second time out for Morgan was definitely not the charm; this dreary talkfest sorely lacks the wiggled-out hair which made *Bloodbath* such an idiosyncratic kick. Instead we've got yet another Sunn Classics snoozer that's all idle, loo-winded speculation, stunted eyewitness testimonies, cheesy dramatic recreations of Sasquatch sightings, the usual blithering scientific commentary, actors in nifty haircuts romping around the forest, a stuffy tone, and grave narrator Peter Graves making arid academic pronouncements ("This may be the most startling film you ever see," Peter remarks early on, a promise the pic doesn't even come close to fulfilling).

Yeti and the Loch Ness monster are briefly touched upon, but Bigfoot is certainly the focal point of this outing. (Tasty trivia tidbit: Morgan, under his "Robert Gossett" nom de plume, co-wrote a book entitled *Bigfoot: The Mysterious Monster*, said to feature lotsa fuzzy black and white photos of 'ol BF and was published in 1975 by Sunn Classics to coincide with this doc's theatrical release!)

What really undoes this dud are the dopey comments made by numerous eyewitnesses ("Bears just don't walk on their hind legs like that," one astutely comments. And a woman under hypnosis repeatedly moans, "It smells terrible"). Sure, the Patterson footage gets treated out for the umpteenth time, Sasquatch's pawprints, hair, and fices are all discussed, eyewitnesses are put under hypnosis and subjected to polygraph tests, psychic Peter Hurkos and anthropologist Grover Krantz are interviewed, and a fancy state-of-the-art digital machine analyzes a tape recording of Bigfoot's ghastly howling, but it's all to no avail, none of this stuff is tangible enough to be persuasive.

Still, Morgan does fleetingly appear as himself and man does he have magnetic star presence! With his gleaming hairless pate, trim goatee, muscular build, and gruffly sincere manner, this computer specialist turned monster hunter who's had a major league hard-on for Bigfoot ever since he first saw Mr. Haven't You Ever Heard of Deondra back in 1957 comes across like a composite of G. Gordon Liddy, Robert Tessier (y'know, that bulking thug who mixed it up with Charles Bronson in *Hard Times*), and Donald Pleasance as *Halloween*'s obsessive shrink Dr. Loomis. Judging from his fiercely monolithic, larger-than-life, rough'n-tumble he-man persona showcased herein, I must state for the record that it's an honest god-damn shame that Big Bad Baldo Bob never got his own globe-trotting action/adventure TV series ala Jacques Cousteau.

## Other Docs

While on the subject of top-rate trashy tabloid-style documentaries, we definitely gotta single out the deliciously histrionic Film Ventures

International offering *The Force Beyond* for its loopyly engaging chuck-a-bit-of-everything-into-the-barmy-mix stuffed-to-the-gills overkill mishmash approach to presenting bizarre phenomena on our planet.

Other catch-all docs to include a segment about Bigfoot include:

- The eminently missable peblum entitled *Mysteries from Beyond Earth*
- The recent, mercifully brief 25-minute loser *Secrets of the Unknown: Bigfoot and Witches*
- The crashing bore that is Volume 3 of Arthur C. Clarke's *Mysterious World: The Missing Arc: Mart Dragons, Dinosaurs, and Giant Snakes*.

## KIDDIE FILMS

*Harry and the Hendersons* served as the patrocinated paradigm for a uniformly awful spate of '90s direct-to-video children's movies which like many kiddie pics made in that dimly uncreative "play it safe" era strictly adhere to a tried'n-true proven formula. In this case, it's the preachy ecology consciousness of the *Free Willy* films. Worse yet, the '90s Bigfoot kid pics commit the egregious and all-too-typical wimpy '90s "politically correct" sin of thoroughly emasculating a creature previously perceived as pretty scrappy, untamed, and rough-around-the-edges, reducing Sasquatch to a gentle, goofy, harmless giant who's basically nothing more than an oversized troll doll or a tall, towering humanoid teddy bear who might as well have an enormous "Hug me!" sign hung around his neck. Little Bigfoot was the first and debatably worst of these misguided abortions.

## Harry and the Hendersons

In the mid-'80s Bigfoot films went disastrously wrong by taking an ill-advised detour into unostentatiously gooey saccharine tosh with the big-budget aimed-at-children treacle *Harry and the Hendersons* (a.k.a. *Bigfoot and the Hendersons*).

It comes as no surprise that this teeth-rotting garb was executive produced by superegg supreme Steven Spielberg, who as this pic and Roberts Blossom's electrifying "I saw Bigfoot once" speech in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* clearly confirms has got a closet hard-on for Sasquatch. (Bigfoot also makes a cameo appearance in *Radio Flyer*, an exasperatingly oversentimental kiddie feature that Spielberg had nothing to do with but that is definitely sappy enough to pass muster as sub-Spielberg, much.)

The sole surprising thing about *Harry and the Hendersons* is that William Deva, the same man responsible for the biker blast *Northville Cemetery Massacre* and the nifty time travel sci-fi western *Time Rider*, both directed and co-wrote this sitcom-level piffle. John Lithgow and Melinda Dillon are criminally wasted as bland suburbanite parents of two obnoxious brat kids

who adopt a cuddly, innocuous Bigfoot ("Harry") into the family after Lithgow accidentally clips the loveable beast with his car during a camping trip. Trouble occurs (overplayed by a Bob Morgan-ish Bigfoot huster [broadly overshadowed by David Suchet] comes poking around the neighborhood looking to bag himself a Sasquatch. Kevin Peter Hall, the late over-seven-foot-tall thesp best known for this film and for playing the evil nastymon-hatted scaly alien in the *Predator* movies, gives a finely expressive pantomime performance as Harry, but the bumbling creature's cuddly antics wear thin very fast. M. Emmet Walsh as Lithgow's scarpous pop and Don Amiche as a nice guy anthropologist are given precious little to do, the sticky-sweet sentiment is cloying in the extreme, the anti-hunting message is clumsily rendered, and the striving-to-be-cute humor proves to be more vexing than amusing.

Still, as bad as *Harry and the Hendersons* is, it nonetheless spun off a short-lived syndicated TV series with first-rate character actor Bruce Davison (most recently seen as the mutant-beseeching McCarthy-like senator in *X-Men*) replacing Lithgow as the loving, but long-suffering dad.

## Bigfoot

Made for television around the same time as *Harry and the Hendersons*, the Walt Disney studios production *Bigfoot* makes for a startlingly high-grade children's movie, primarily because it carefully avoids all the nauseating sentimental claptrap which made *Harry and the Hendersons* such a misshapen piece of muck.

In *Bigfoot*, two single parents — trying to make a go of it as a couple — go camping in the Walla Walla mountains with their uncooperative kids in tow. The son is into nature, the daughter likes music, but can't stand each other and feel like their respective parents are neglecting them. The rivalry between these two is accurate and convincing; ditto the grudging acceptance the initially combative pair develop for each other when they get lost in the woods, run into a male and female Sasquatch, and get adopted by the gentle, misunderstood creatures so they can replace the child they recently lost.

The parents, assisted by a gruff, but sweet and helpful Dian Fossey-esque lady anthropologist (superbly played by estimable character actress Colleen Dewhurst), search for the missing kids. Meanwhile, a snide, supercilious millionaire (a pleasantly understated turn by Joseph Maher) doggedly tracks down the Bigfoot; he's assisted by a cynical doubting Thomas Native American chopper pilot. Director Danny Huston — son of the legendary John Huston and the guy to blame for the ghastly Burt Reynolds-starring woman-in-peril groaner *The Madchens* — lets the simple story unfold in a low-key and unforced manner, keeping the sentiment to a tasteful and thus tolerable minimum. Huston also elicits credible performances from a mostly non-star cast (James Skown and Gracie Harrison are excellent as the kids; Adam Karl and Candace Cameron are solid as the worried parents) and allows the relaxed, leisurely narrative to trot along in a completely

believable real-life casually slow pace.

John Groves' smartly written script never degenerates into pulpy pathos, dopey slapstick humor, or graceless moralizing, and it draws the characters in a plausible manner. For instance, Maher's villain isn't your standard mustache-stroking hamburger; instead he's a smug miserhell who simply wants to capture Bigfoot for the glory alone. And the script cleverly plays around with Bigfoot film conventions and even gives the Sasquatches a few endearing eccentric mannerisms.

Frank Flynn's pretty, unflashy cinematography conveys a perfectly cogent approximation of everyday plain reality while Bruce Rowland's litigiously harmonic score is spare and unobtrusive throughout.

*Bigfoot* serves as a textbook example of how to make a fantastic premise absorbing and creditable by means of a cogently plain, no-frills execution that puts said premise within the realms of possibility. It's the only up-to-par Bigfoot kiddie pic ever made.

## Little Bigfoot

In *Little Bigfoot*, a suburban family vacationing in the Oregon wilderness befriends a vomitably adorable baby Bigfoot (who resembles a squat, wizened old Chinese man) and its benevolent ape-like mommy, whose natural forest habitat is being destroyed by an evil, greedy logging company.

Art Camacho's soft-hearted direction does nothing to improve on Richard A. Preston's ungodly script, which wallows in abhorrently glutinous mush, resorts to all-thumbs slapstick humor at regular intervals, makes a few clumsy stabs at topicality (besides the painfully overstated anti-deforestation theme, we also get a single mom trying desperately to raise three unruly teenagers). And the script grossly overplays its hand with its strident and overearnest "protect the environment" treacherous propaganda agenda (the baby Bigfoot at one point actually cries when it comes across a bunch of tree stumps!). The characters in particular are laboriously drawn: the good guys are disgustingly sticky-sweet, pure of heart, and well-meaning to the point of total obnoxiousness while the villains are all one-dimensional hard-drinking, trigger happy, brutish/bourish macho louts (one guy even sports a pitiful eyepatch!). The cast gets horribly misused as well; *Halloween* strangulation victim P.J. Soles appears haggard and worn-out as the harried, but caring single mother, Matt McCoy needs it up someone's annoying as a nice guy sheriff, Kenneth Tiger does far too much one-note sneering and snarling as the callous, mean-spirited logging company owner, and a pale, moping, wistful-post-prime Don Stroud seems very ill at ease as a jerkoid logging foreman.

Ken Blakely's dewy, honey-hued cinematography, Louis Febré's sub-John Williams orchestral sap score, and the hideously fake Sasquatches further contribute to this bomb's shit-ass pitiful quality.

## Little Bigfoot 2: The Journey Home

Cut from the same stomach-knotting cheese-cloth as the first *Little Bigfoot*, the irredeemably atrocious "we all could have done without it" sequel *Little Bigfoot 2: The Journey Home* baldly rebashes the original pic, but in no way improves upon it. In fact, it's slower, duller, talkier, and cornier than the first one, almost a note-for-note secondhand remake with a poorly articulated anti-hunting message replacing the original's ham-fistedly rendered "protect the environment" subtext.

This time a overworked, neglectful and ineffectual insurance salesman single dorkmunch dad (Stephen Furst, best-known as the dweebish fraternity fatboy Roulder in *Animal House* but whom I, ever the iconoclastic individualist, more fondly recall as the pitiable, brutalized overgrown childman kept in a basement in the perverse horror creepfest *The Usuals*) takes his whiny disheveled son (*Home Improvement*'s Taseen Noah Smith), repulsively cutesy daughter (*Baywatch*'s Melody Clarke), and the son's overbearing fuck-head friend (*Roseanne*'s Michael Fishman) on a camping trip in the Oregon wilderness. Naturally, the kids discover Little Bigfoot and protect the minuscule nipper from the nefarious clutches of a nogoodnik industrialist.

Art Camacho's thraddlingly leaden direction goes through the generic silly/frappy kiddie pic paces sans zest or finesse. Richard Preston, Jr.'s cookie cutter script lays on the cheap fart jokes, Bigfoot body odor gags, that old camping feature standby the scary story about the hook-handed maniac, and goosing sentiment with appalling thickness. Tom Bosley, that incoherent *Happy Days* blubberball, does one of his patented irritating cuddly old fuddy-duddy turns as a folksy sheriff. Idiomatic touches abound, such as having the allegedly cagey and elusive Sasquatches romping around the woods in broad daylight right next to an open road, thus making it easier for evil humans to spot and hunt them!

Jeffrey A. Cook's uncomfortably shaky cinematography, Jim Halfpenny's mechanically whimsical score, a few clunky slow motion vehicular stunts, and the faltering attempts at digging into Bigfoot's Native American folklore origins don't help matters any, either. The only useful purpose this otherwise worthless tripe serves is to establish one key component of 90's Bigfoot children's film casts: washed-up has-been middle-aged actors co-star with budding, up-and-coming rising adolescent sitcom veterans in these godforsaken fizzlers. In short, *Little Bigfoot 2* qualifies as one big bust of a movie.

## Bigfoot: The Unforgettable Encounter

The *Little Bigfoot* pictures are bad enough, so naturally a *Little Bigfoot* reunion movie is even worse. Nobody asked for it, but - goddammit! - the dimly lame and prosy *Bigfoot: The*

*Unforgettable Encounter* brings *Little Bigfoot* thesp Matt McCoy, composer Louis Febré, and cinematographer Ken Blakely all together again for a second-time-surly-in-it-the-charm snorefest which rebashes the shopworn a-boy-and-his-dog kiddie cliff premise with one slight alteration: a sweet, harmless, and kind-hearted gentle Bigfoot substitutes for the canine. Besides that minor change, everything else about this drek is toringly by-the-numbers hack formula business as usual.

A wildlife artist tapes a Patterson film-like movie with his portable Camcorder. Said film catches the eye of an obsessively malevolent, Bob Morgan-esque millionaire (insipidly played by David Rasche) who's been trying to catch a Sasquatch for over twenty years. So Rasche puts a hefty bounty on Bigfoot's head. Naturally, the woods are soon overflowing with opportunistic media parasites, an eager-beaver scientific team, and trigger-happy hillbilly hunters. Meanwhile, a young teenage boy (*Home Improvement*'s Zachery Ty Bryan) gets lost in the forest and befriends Bigfoot. Of course, the lad does the best that he can to protect Sasquatch from the hunters and reporters who are doggedly pursuing him.

An air of entertainment-cupping banality permeates this entire feature, from Cory Michael Eubanks' drab direction (Eubanks also penned the tired, more-stale-than-year-old-bread glop script, which comes complete with an anti-hunting "please leave all the animals alone" bleeding-heart liberal pussy message) to Blakely's overly-sappy photography, to the simplistic characters (the villains are mostly your garden variety cosine, boozey, giggly, pea-brained white-trash redneck hunter stereotypes while the sickeningly goody-goody protagonists are pure streaks of syrupy white fine Samaritans).

McCoy once again contributes a too nice to easily stomach performance as a well-meaning, but ineffective park ranger, while both Clint and Rance Howard lend their forever unwelcome acting non talents in supporting roles. The film's title notwithstanding, *Bigfoot: The Unforgettable Encounter* proves to be immediately forgettable fluff.



## Big and Hairy

Bigfoot children's movies further plummet into the dimmest, most despairing depths of smackin'-the-bottom-of-the-cinematic-sewer dreariness with the rapid and forced basketball sports fantasy *Big and Hairy*. For the record, I hate children's movies. Moreover, I loathe sports with a borderline incendiary passion. Naturally, a kiddie feature centering on a basketball-playing adolescent male Sasquatch has the same chance of winning over yours truly as O.J. Simpson has at getting his pre-murder trial life back (i.e., no chance whatsoever, bub).

The film concerns klutzy, screwy teenage misfit geeking Picoasso, who just wants to fit in. But in the somewhat hamlet of Cedar Island, you're either good at basketball or you ain't worth diddly shit. Picoasso stinks at basketball, so understandably his life blows. That's until Picoasso befriends a duffy, gangly, and innocuous 7-ft tall Bigfoot who plays basketball with exceptional agility and athleticism. Picoasso recruits Bigfoot for the junior high school basketball team and the team begins a winning streak which could lead them to the big championship. Gee, what do you think happens next?

Man, does this movie ever bite giant-sized donkey dick! A slumming, post-*Without Richard* Thomas spazzes it up to a retchsome extreme as Picoasso's murderously cheery flakoid inventor dad. The Bigfoot looks awful. Daryl Bennett and Jim Outridge's affectedly sprightly, asty-poo score hits an endless succession of sour notes. Philip Sink's flaccid direction adds not even an inkling of style or vibrance to the pitiful proceedings. The climax is clearly telegraphed far in advance. The pacing plods slower than a drunken snail trying to scale Mount Everest. The attempts at humor are horribly labored (Bigfoot cutting loose on the dance floor at a Valentine's Day Party is particularly painful to watch).

What a load of louseness! And, not only is this film horsethit, it's derivative and uninspired horsethit at that, for the basic premise is directly lifted from *Teen Wolf*.

## A GOOFY MOVIE

Bigfoot's fifteen-minute appearance in the agonizingly cumberlunked *A Goofy Movie* in no way constitutes as an improvement of any kind as far as the generally substandard quality associated with Sasquatch children's movies is concerned. Why, the massive luncheon has nothing more than a glorified bit part.

Feddless kinase suburbanite dad Goofy takes his surly malcontent teenage son Max on a fishing trip for lousy cornball father-son bonding nonsense. Goofy accidentally gets a large steak attached to his fishing hook. This attracts Bigfoot, who traces the fishing line back to Goofy and Max. The embattled pair wind up trapped inside their car. Bigfoot roars and grumbles, chases a few folks through the woods, dances to the Bee Gees' "Stayin' Alive," and moans loudly while sleeping on top of Goofy's automobile. Goofy manages to film his encounter with Bigfoot with

a portable camcorder, but alas Sasquatch gets a hold of the videotape and steals it.

(Hey, did you ever notice how single parents on camping excursions with their usually estranged children are always bumping into Bigfoot? Something fishy is going on here. Sasquatch probably serves some kind of symbol-function in these features. Does he embody the tremendous stress and pressure intrinsic to raising kids on your own? Maybe Bigfoot represents our puritanical, moralistically uptight paternal society's force disregard for and gross intolerance of single parents demonically manifesting itself in the flesh? Or the huge fella could be a surrogate for the missing parent? Boy, the metaphoric possibilities are endless.)

Bigfoot then quickly disappears from the pic, thereafter leaving the hapless viewer to contend with obnoxious hipster teen characters, a slushy adolescent romance, gratingly sanitized big-hop-elated pop song, and more irritatingly stupid humor than you can shake a TV remote at.

## ADULT FILMS

### The Geek

Out-of-the-ordinary Bigfoot flicks hit their all-time "I can't believe this fucking movie is for real!" gutter-crawling nadir with the astoundingly awful early '70s hardcore no-budget porno abomination *The Geek*, a singularly horrid growler of a stinkoeronic screwball. The blurry, bawdy, in focus, hard-to-read opening credits title card clearly establishes the freakishly feeble, fumble-fingered fucked-upness that's tenuously sustained from ghostly start to hideous end. The story is your "here we go again" trite premise of six coed (and this time decidedly bifiduous) young adults wandering into the woods in search of you know who. Forty murderously protracted minutes of preliminary porkin' ensues, followed by a last reel 15 minute appearance by unquestionably the sorriest, most abjectly unbelievable Bigfoot to ever haul its pitiful raggedy ass in front of a camera. This laughable monster is a miserable sight to see; he's a hulking, heavy-breathing, repulsively grumpy/greasy grungeball biker type with out of control staggery hair, black shoe polish covering his beefy face, a nastily frayed, tattered, beaten-all-to-filly-shit fur coat, and a puny, hung like a chipmunk pecker hanging out of the open zipper of his dirty brown corduroy pants! Bigfoot proceeds to wearily assfuck two chicks in a pair of harsh (although thankfully abbreviated) celluloid rapes which almost puts the infamously twisted and severely misogynistic sequence depicting a foul-mouthed ventriloquist's dummy vigorously banging a black mama somethin' brutal front *Black Devil Doll* from *Hell to Shame*. Technically, this dodo is borderline Doris Wisnamsque in its staggering ineptitude: a tunelessly droning orchestral sludge score, limply staged, strangely unenergetic, and thus totally unexciting fuck scenes, jarring absence of any come shoes, ponderously

drawn-out trekkin' through the wilderness peddling footage, terminally clueless, "I couldn't blur out my lines or hit my marks with even the faintest hint of uptide-style acting, scratchy sound, obstinately stiff 'y'all stationary cinematography (what few pans and tracking shots featured herein are very awkward), in-cared dialogue (sample line: "Fuck me now, lover! Fuck me!"), a grimly zealous, all plotted on No Doze moribund pace, and the hopelessly listless, let's get this sucker shot already perfunctory direction all ensure that this turkey's resolutely rotten in every conceivable department. However, for all its glaring faults The Geek does offer a revealing insight into Sasquatch's depraved sexuality, an earth-shattering observation also made in *Night of the Demon*. Judging from Bigfoot's backdoor bandit antics shown in both pictures, one can properly deduce that Mr. Smelly Shagbutt most conclusively ain't no "missionary man," if you catch my drift.

### The Beauties and the Beast

For further spectacularly silly/slapdash -- and hence often almost unbearably sidesplitting -- early '70s Sasquatch soft-core sexcapades we've got the amusingly skew sexploitation wall-to-wall bare female fleshfest *The Beauties and the Beast* (a.k.a. *The Beast and the Vixens & Desperately Seeking Jeni*).

Gaynor MacLaren's patchy script offers more of a snazzy idea than an actual story: A lonely peeping tom Bigfoot abducts hot-bodied young hippie honeys from a nearby commune and takes them back to his cave to keep him company.

Fortunately, director Roy Nance inexcusably milks the skimpy premise for every last sensationally shameless, leering, voyeuristic girl-watching cheapjack sleazebag thrill. The pic hits it's jaw-droppingly surreal apex during a wacko nightmare sequence showing two juicy stark naked gals having an Old West-style gunslinger showdown!

And finally, who needs an it-would-only-get-in-the-way plot when you've got the exquisitely bouezy/bountiful redhead Sharon Kelly (a.k.a. hardcore fuck film actress Colleen Brennae, who makes sporadic appearances in the downtown cop drama *Howie* as the gorgeously unclad corpse of Ben Johnson's murdered daughter), the juicy watermelon-busted, preposterously naked, stacked, and pecked whole lotta voluptuous woman figure sportin' Uschi Dgard (who speaks all her hardly intelligible dialogue in a lovably thick, heavy, practically impossible to understand garbled German accent), and the regrettably underappreciated, but always welcome small-breasted, deliciously lissome blonde boner queen spritz Sandra Carey peeling off their clothes and amply displaying their generously endowed world-class physiques with pleasing regularity. The upsurprisingly inapt hip, mellow, finger-snappin' cocktail lounge score takes the viewer straight to total surreal groovyness while the ratty, all-scratched-up-to-scrunchy-shit photography splices up the pic's fantastically kooky/turid

DESPERATELY SEEKING YETTI

# THE BEAUTIES AND THE BEAST



degeneracy and the maladroitness jump! back and forth fragmented narrative structure joyously eschews continuity in favor of a strangely becoming sense of "what the fuck's goin' on here?" type disjointedness. And the Bigfoot creature itself is a splendidly sickly, shabby, shambling ramshackle gasser to behold: With its fat, puffy-nosed face, mangy black coat, large white buck teeth, and gigantic, muscular behemoth build, the hirsute Polish mongroid lecher resembles a last place loser participant from a tenth-rate kindergarten Halloween costume party contest. A so-terrible-it's-quite-tasty cinecheese please.

## ALPINE AFFAIRS

Just like Bigfoot films, yeti movies are open to

the occasional deviant outre manifestation. The thoroughly unremarkable '95 porno *Alpine Affairs* is one such aberration.

A plump, monkey-faced Abominable Snowman with a long tail and bushy white hair has been abducting lovely young ladies vacationing at a local ski lodge. The lodge's owner assigns a squad of coed mountain rangers to investigate and get to the bottom of things. Of course, this being a fuck flick, the rangers spend more time sucking and boning than they do chasing after the monster.

Boy, is this one beat pic: Besides the depressing fact that the creature is given a regrettably minor role and ultimately gets exposed as just some wacko guy in a freaky costume, the hapless viewer has to contend with a flimsy plot,

one-note characters, banal "yes, yes, fuck me baby, you make me so horny!"-style dirty dialogue, static videography, crapoid acting, and the standard array of overpumped, heavily made up, and charisma-lacking unattainable fantasy figure lobotomoid harlots.

## TELEVISION

Naturally, Bigfoot's considerable popularity isn't just on the big screen; our boy has also popped up with pleasing regularity on television programs.

### The Six Million Dollar Man

Perhaps the most dearly beloved among these idiot-box appearances has gotta be the hirsute one's occasional guest star turns on that quintessentially '70s cheery gimmick superhero show *The Six Million Dollar Man*.

The two-part intro episode "The Secret of Bigfoot" has a group of subterranean aliens (led by quirky Severn Darden and fetching Stefanie Powers) creating a glitchy bionic Bigfoot to protect them from middlebrow humans. The aliens want to abduct Lee Majors and study him so they can do repairs on their malfunctioning mechanical Sasquatch. Said Sasquatch is a real troublemaker: he kidnaps screaming helpless women, scares folks so severely that he makes their eyes literally glaze over, has a nasty penchant for destroying property, and uproots a tree while fighting Majors in one of the show's patently strenuous slow-mo ballistic battles.

Sasquatch, Powers, and Darden all came back for the equally enjoyable encore two-parter "The Return of Bigfoot." This time a faction of evil renegade aliens (led by John Savon) have broken off from the good guy extraterrestrials so they can plunder and take over our planet. They use Bigfoot as a key instrument to achieve this selfish goal. It's up to Majors and bionic woman Lindsay Wagner to foil 'em.

And in episode "Bigfoot V," bionic Sasquatch has decided to stay on our planet and is slowly mutating into an organic being. Bigfoot gets awakened from his deep sleep while he's in mid-transformation and runs amuck. Both a spunky lady anthropologist and an exploitative trail guide (Geoffrey Lewis) butt Sasquatch down, so Majors comes to the large hummer's rescue.

Bigfoot was initially played by wrestler Andre the Giant and later essayed by Ted Cassidy, whom most TV viewers know as Lurch on *The Addams Family*.

### The Secret of Isis

Representing the distaff side of '70s superhero shows, 1975-1976's *The Secret of Isis* (a.k.a. *Isis*) has a heroine, Isis, who's the descendant of an ancient Egyptian goddess. Isis is therefore endowed with paranormal powers which enable her to "soar as the falcon soars," "run with the speed of gazelles," and "command the

elements of earth and sky." Posing as high school science teacher Andrea Thomas, Isis fights crime on the side.

Our old buddy Sasquatch makes a sort-of appearance in an episode called — what else? — "Bigfoot." Two teenagers spot something big and hairy loping around the California woods. They quickly deduce that it must be Bigfoot. Then a student, camera in tow, goes venturing into the woods to snap a picture of Bigfoot. He gets hurt when he falls down a cliff. Bigfoot comes to his aid, only he ain't really Bigfoot — he's actually a scruffy, hairy, mountain hermit (nicely played by Bill Engvall), who lives secluded in the woods because he doesn't want people to persecute him due to the fact that he's so large. (The title character on the "Mr. Bigfoot" episode of *Death Valley Days* turned out to be just some tall guy.)

Isis finally shows up and delivers the show's heartfelt message about how folks can be cruel to those who seem different. The friendly giant agrees and admits he's ready to give mankind a second chance.

## MacGyver

Sasquatch made another sort of appearance on the "Ghost Ship" episode of *MacGyver*.

The title character — a resourceful special agent for Uncle Sam — goes into the Wisconsin wilderness for a basic maneuvers exercise. MacGyver stumbles across a rusty abandoned ship nestled on a remote woodland lake. Curiosity gets the best of MacGyver and he boards the boat. He immediately runs into a bestial, aggressive Bigfoot. He also finds and rescues a fair damsel in distress.

The show starts well enough, with a careful, involving build-up, an eerie aura of mystery, a bunch of Native Americans popping up to explain the legend of Bigfoot, and an impossibly monstrous Sasquatch all lending this episode a sense of genuine creepiness and uncertainty. Too bad the second half degenerates into action formula banality, with the Bigfoot revealed as an artificial ruse devised to cover up a band of oil thieves. Still, things conclude on a pleasingly ambiguous note with the suggestion of a bonafide Bigfoot roaming around somewhere out there in the vast, expansive forest.

## Bigfoot and Wildboy

For Sasquatch Saturday morning live action entertainment, there's only one show to see. Yep, it's the sublimely screwy late-70s series *Bigfoot and Wildboy*, from those undisputed kings of '70s kiddie insanity, Sid and Marty Kroff.

Eight years ago Bigfoot (bravely thers Ray Young, the evil acidhead who freaks out in the disco in *River Phoenix*) discovered a lost male child in the Great Northwest wilderness of Southern California (!) and raised the tyke to become a Tarzan-like lad named Wildboy (Joseph Butcher, your basic blonde Malibu surfer dude type).

With his unruly mass of all-body shag and bulky build, Bigfoot resembles one of three things:

- \*Chewbacca's brother
- \*A really hairy hippie on steroids, or
- \*Greg Allman on a very bad day.

Bigfoot speaks in barely coherent grunty-grumble tones, delivering a message about nature and the environment at the end of each show. He tosses stinky-dink paper mache boulders as if they were stinky-dink paper mache boulders. He survives avalanches without a scratch. And he runs and leaps in hilariously drawn-out slow motion ala Lee Majors on *The Six Million Dollar Man* while groovy-chill music and synthesized sound effects accompany his every super-strong move.

Naturally, Bigfoot and Wildboy have many misadventures: foiling plutonium thieves, battling a mummy, encountering alien beings, and facing off with a red-skinned Incredible Hulk-style monster (portrayed by Carol Strayken, who later became a regular on *Twin Peaks* and was Lurch in *The Addams Family* films). Wildboy frequently gets captured by baddies, and Bigfoot has to save his hapless candy ass time and time again.

Sure, this show is unquestionably a dippy hunk of "Me Decade" TV cheese, but it's the program's very cheesiness which makes it a topflight tacky treasure.

## Land of the Lost

As wonderfully wicked as *Bigfoot and Wildboy* is, it still ain't got nothing on kooky '70s Saturday morning Sid and Marty Kroff kidvid marvel *Land of the Lost*, which qualifies as one of my all-time favorite TV shows.

Stalwart single dad Rick Marshall (firm-as-granite Spencer Milligan), his whiny son Will (lone pin-up hunking Wesley Eure), and spunky daughter Holly (pig-tailed Kathy Coleman) are absorbed through a time portal into a primitive world populated by dinosaurs, cavemen, vicious humanoid lizards, and other such otherworldly beings. Dad was eventually replaced by Uncle Jack (Ron Harper), but the show never lost its strangely beguiling sense of zany fun, with the heeey-jerky stop-motion animation, chintzy sets, endearingly poor special effects, and that stupendous hillbilly bluesy theme song ("High on the rapids/Oh their tiny raft/Sucked into the valley deep below") adding greatly to the weirdness.

The trio are terrorized by Grumpy the Tyrannosaurus Rex, befriended by Chaku the Bigfootesque simpaton football missing link, and try their best to leave this alternate universe. Of course, they run across plenty of other bizarre beasts, such as Medusa and the Abominable Snowman.

The latter makes an unwelcome visit after Will and Uncle Jack take a unicorn from the Land of Snow back to their land as a pet for Holly. Yeti comes to the Land of the Lost and snatches the unicorn back so he can eat it. Holly and Chaku venture into the Land of Snow to retrieve the unicorn. Holly gives the Abominable Snowman a slice of cake as a peace offering (!), discovers that he's afraid of fire, and gets rescued by Will and Uncle Jack in the nick of time. The yeti chases the bunch out of his terrain and Uncle Jack destroys

the bridge which links both worlds together in order to ensure that the pesky critter won't be showing up again anytime soon.

An awesome, vintage '70s time capsule of lovably ludicrous lunacy.

## Ultraman

For further Abominable Snowman boob tube nuttiness, there's the supremely spacely '60s Japanese superhero show *Ultraman*. This program combines the best, most righteously wicked elements of *Inferman* and the *Godzilla* films into a single crack-brained package: miserable dubbing, cut-rate FX, dinky Toika Toy miniatures, dipstick dialogue ("You asked for it Goldien; now you're going to get it"), and a superhero wearing a goofy red and silver costume which looks like it was purchased at a K-Mart firesale.

A giant, silly-looking yeti-type creature appears in the "Woo: The Snow Monster" episode. A new resort opens up in the mountains. A local hunter spots "Woo" in the nearby woods. An orphan snow girl tries to protect Woo to no avail. Folks panic and leave the resort. The resort owner calls in a gallant science team. The townspeople blame the girl and attack her. Woo gets pissed and trashes the resort. Ultraman comes to the rescue. Woo and Ultraman get down and boogie. Woo suddenly disappears when the girl is killed. You see, Woo was really the snow girl's guardian, so the girl's death gives the misunderstanding, actually quite caring and paternal heart no reason to continue existing. Tragic, man.

## Downtime

Perhaps the dullest TV-related appearance of the yeti was in the dreary made-for-video sci-fi production *Downtime*, a British spin-off of the BBC cult TV series *Dr. Who*. Specifically, *Downtime* follows up on "The Abominable Snowman" and "Web of Fear" episodes of *Dr. Who*.

A malefic alien force known as the Great Intelligence, after remaining dormant for 25 years, attempts to take over Earth and control everybody's mind through computers, using the technology academy New World University, its brainwashed student body, and an army of robot yetis. Retired alien fighter the Brigadier, a soldier for the special agency U.N.I.T., breaks into action to thwart the invaders, aided by perky journalist Sarah Jane Smith.

Mark Platts' script possesses a fair degree of promise but gets hampered by lifeless direction, bone-dry performances, a critical absence of tension, and too much humdrum talk.

The lumbering yetis are quite dingy-looking. With glowing red eyes, three chubby fingers, nondescript faces, and plump brown fur, the costumes seem to have been made from shabbily sewn-together old carpets. Very lackluster.

## Cartoons

Appearances by both Bigfoot and the Abominable Snowman in cartoon shows and children's programs are legion:

\*Impressible jokster Bugs Bunny and his sour-puss foil Daffy Duck run into a Himalayan yeti in the madcap '61 Chuck Jones animated short "The Abominable Snow Rabbit."

\*On *Rugrats*, Grandpa relates the Sasquatch-leaning "Legend of Satchmo" to the title hyperactive yid demons during their first camping trip. \*On the "That's Snow Ghost" episode of *Scooby-Doo, Where Are You?*, craven canine Scooby-Doo and equally cowardly human Shaggy meet the scary flying albino specter of the Abominable Snowman during a ski vacation.

\*In the "Alien Foot" episode of Japanese import cartoon *Battle for the Planets*, the fearless orphan firefrightening quintet, G Force, investigates reports of a yellow-eyed Sasquatch in Tibet (it's should be a yeti).

(Gratuitous show-offy '70s cartoon nerd trivia tidbit: Chronically colorful Top 40 disc jockey Casey Kasem, who supplied voices for both proto-slacker Shaggy on *Scooby-Doo* and commander Mark on *Battle for the Planets*.)

\*The Abominable Snowman appears in the "Monsters in the Monastery" episode of the Hanna-Barbera adventure cartoon *Jonny Quest*. Jonny and pals go to the remote mountain kingdom of Khamjung to investigate a series of harrowing attacks allegedly being done by the yeti. \*An absurd Bigfootish beast of local legend was the recipient of the expected gross-out indignities in a typically vulgar and tasteless *South Park* outing.

\*On the "Little Bigfoot" episode of *My Pet Monster* the purple garbage-eating thingie of the title goes on a camping trip with his three human buddies, and the bunch befriended a pink-nosed baby Sasquatch whom they reunite with his mother after the little fellow gets lost in woods.

## Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer

A bouncing Abominable Snowman terrorizes the North Pole in the simply fabulous '64 yuletide holiday special *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*; I must confess that big, bad Bumble frightened the living piss out of me the first time I saw it as a wee five-year-old tyke (I actually wound up hiding behind a couch; that's how much he scared me). However, by the show's end the mammoth polska has literally and figuratively been

defanged and exposed as a large, soft white teddy at heart, a resolution which not only radically goes against the evil yeti grain of the mid-'50s and early '60s, but also predicts the gentle giant fad of '90s Sasquatch children's movies by a good three decades.

## YETI MOVIES

One offshoot of the Bigfoot film genre is the yeti movie, which can be deemed a sub-genre within a sub-genre. (*The Empire Strikes Back*, the first and best of the *Star Wars* sequels, may very well be the beast's single most famous film appearance to date; a yeti-like, clawed snow creature stalks Luke Skywalker early in the pic. Said monster's fleeting turn was slightly expanded for the '97 special edition.)

### Snow Creature

The first and debatably worst Abominable Snowman feature was the rock-bottom '54 creature feature quickie *Snow Creature*. This carbon copy of *Kang Kong* (stitch), *The Werewolf of London*, and even the exemplary giant ant humdinger *Them!* constitutes as a most ineuspicious cinematic debut for the legendary mountain-dwelling albino Bigfoot.

A stuffed-shirt botanist, his comparably blah assistant, and a bunch of anonymous oriental extras embark on a perilous voyage into the Himalayas to discover a rare plant species. The expedition stumbles across a predatory yeti (a tall, gangly guy in a threadbare, poorly stitched fur costume) who in tried-and-true B-movie monster fashion makes off with the first available female he can get his grubby paws on. The team manages to get the girl back and capture the beast. They bring it to Los Angeles, only to have the ratty haircell escape and seek refuge in the City of Angels' grimy sewers.

An air of total creative and budgetary impoverishment permeates every aspect of this sour lemon. There's lackluster direction by Billy Wilder's no-talent brother W. Lyle Wilder, lethargic pacing, primitive fade-outs, dry thesping from a just-ittin'-all-the-usual-preprogrammed-marks zombie cast, running-off-at-the-mouth narration

("The first days were uneventful, monotonous, and routine," the botanist comments early in the nonaction, a remark which can serve as a concise critique of the film itself), a few stomach-knotting moments of goopy sentiment, and an unimpressive star beastie.

What really deflates this celluloid lead balloon is its complete lack of any truly vitality — this ol' stinko Bigfoot bud biscuit is so inert that it basically just lies motionless on your TV screen for 72 dead minutes.

### Half Human

*Half Human* (a.k.a. *Monster Snowman*) was the second '50s Abominable Snowman opus to come lumbering down from the hills. And while it's a marginal improvement over *Snow Creature*, it's still no great shakes as a movie.

Once more, an expedition into the Japanese mountains stumbles across the yeti and its offspring. They also discover a primitive society who worship the yeti ala the backwoods Bigfoot cult in *Night of the Demon*!

Unfortunately, the hack American distributors who released this film in the States produced a severely truncated and oversimplified version of this Japanese-made item (it was done by Toho Studios, the same outfit responsible for *Godzilla*, which coincidentally was also drastically re-edited for American audiences). They chopped out 30-odd minutes and replaced 'em with cheap-looking, frustratingly needless and useless insert sequences starring John Carradine (in his first and probably least hammying Sasquatch cinema outing) along with fellow has-been thesp Morris Ankrum.

The sequences with Carradine and Ankrum are acted and directed with all the skill and panache of a first grade elementary school play, thus draining the punch and tension out of a flick which could have been reasonably effective and interesting on its own. Further damage is wrought by Carradine's asinine narrative commentary ("Even in death his face still carried an expression of fear, shock, and unadmitted terror"). In a shameless cost-cutting move, Carradine's non-stop blathering drowns out all the film's original dialogue, thereby eliminating the necessity for doing any dubbing.

It's a testament to director Inoshiro (Rokun, *Modoru*) Honda's talent that a medium of spooky

WE THREE YETI: (left to right) from *Half Human*, *Horror Express*, and *Man Beast*



ambience and a dash of poignant tragedy somehow manage to shine through this chintzy ragbag mélange of dreary talk and eye-filling irrelevant footage. Moreover, the yeti himself is quite impressive: brawny, limber, and toweringly gestic, he's a genuinely redoubtable beastman.

If there had only been less dull chitchat and more cool creature, this could have been a pretty enjoyable and enthralling romp. But there isn't, so it ain't.

## Man Beast

Fifties yeti movies take another substantial step up in quality with the surprisingly fine *Man Beast*. What makes the quality of this one so remarkable is the fact that Jerry Warren, an often past-the-point-of-all-goes talentless schlockmeister whose oeuvre includes such dreadfully unworthily dodos as *Teenage Zombies*, *The Incredible Perilful World*, and *Frankenstein's Island*, produced and directed it, showing a most atypical adroitness and sense of consistent focus not evident in his other features.

The story once again centers on an ill-advised expedition that encounters a tribe of vicious yetis while poking around the treacherous Himalayan mountains. But this time the admittedly unpromising premise is compensated for by a tight execution.

B. Arthur Kennedy's efficiently compact and straightforward script adds a few tasty twisted twists to the proceedings; having one of the expedition members turn out to be the mutant spawn of an Abominable Snowman and a human woman and having the yetis abducting young ladies for breeding purposes are terrifically perverse touches.

The reasonably complicated characters are realistically drawn and believable. The performances are solid and spirited, with especially commendable turns by Rock Madison as the duplicitous half-man, half-yeti dale and Virginia Maynor as the endearingly spunky heroine. Victor Fisher's able, starkly lit, moody nighttime cinematography imbues the rocky landscape with a splendidly creeped-out gloom-doom atmosphere. The yeti monsters are fantastic: mean, skull-faced, broad-shouldered beastmen who possess an intimidating presence. The attack scenes are presented with real snap and vigor. Much like its high altitude mountain setting, *Man Beast* transcends the cruddy yeti movie norm and stands tall as a superior '50s creature feature.

## Invasion of the Animal People

Whereas *Man Beast* is shockingly good, Jerry Warren's second addition to Sasquatch cinema *Invasion of the Animal People* (aka *Space Invasion from Lapland and Terror in the Midnight Sun*) is simply abysmal.

This time Jerry took an '58 Scandinavian sci-fi/horror picture and shot new footage with old buddy/frequent co-star John Carmine in uplight/professorial mode for a slapped-together atrocity Warren released in '62. The only odd

thing about this practice is that—for once—Jerry didn't butcher a south-of-the-border Mexican fright film as he was prone to doing (*Attack of the Mayan Mummy* and *Face of the Screaming Werewolf* are among the other slipshod cinematic crimes Warren committed).

The movie relates the drab, talky tale of an attempted alien invasion force which sets loose a large, lumbering, murderous yeti-like beast who runs amok all over the desolate, snow-covered Lapland countryside. An international team of scientists, complete with an annoyingly bitchy token female in tow, investigate the spaceship landing site and thwart the invaders.

Once again, the technical credits are strictly from hunger: the dark cinematography unleashes a hideous torrent of horrible fade-outs, the blaring score sporadically drowns out the dialogue, screaming newspaper headlines are used to plug gaping holes in the saggy plot, the pace plods along with all the momentum of a snail on Quasladen, the characters are made out of pencil-thin cardboard, most of the big scary moments take place off screen, and the actors seem come-tone throughout.

Taking amphetamines prior to watching this yawnfest is optional, but definitely advised if you ever decide to give it a stare.

## The Abominable Snow- man of the Himalayas

From the purely crass to sheer class, the lavishly mounted and expertly crafted Hammer Films production *The Abominable Snowman of the Himalayas* (aka *The Abominable Snowman*) eschews the by-now cheap scare tactics most '50s yeti efforts fall prey to. It is instead a refreshingly thoughtful and restrained approach to the legendary mountain-dwelling creature.

The always outstanding Peter Cushing brings his usual unfailing grace and presence to the role of Dr. John Rollason, a polite and moral botanist who joins a bare-bones expedition led by shady American showman Tom Friend (a robust performance by Forrest Tucker) to surmount the dangerous Tibetan peaks in order to discover the elusive yeti. Complications ensue when coarse, racist trapper Ed Shelley (an ideally vile Robert Brown) shoots one of the creatures dead. Morale among the group gives way to total blind panic.

Adeptly directed by Val Guest (*Expresso Bongo*, *When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth*), with a smart script by Nigel Kneale (said screenplay is based on Kneale's acclaimed BBC teleplay *The Creature*), exquisitely stark b&w cinematography by Arthur Grant, a vivid evocation of Tibet and its people, believably perilous mountain climbing sequences, a provocative subtext centering on man's many reasons for wanting to find the yeti (greed, obsession, pursuit of knowledge, scientific curiosity, proving theories on man's evolution, even making man more aware of his own humanity by confirming the yeti's existence), a nerve-rattling atmosphere (the yeti's ghostly howls are particularly eerie), and an unforgettable last-reel appearance by the gentle crea-

tures, *The Abominable Snowman of the Himalayas* is undeniably the best and most accomplished of the '50s yeti movie cycle.

## Horror Express

The yeti had secondary parts in two stand-out '70s Spanish horror pics. The first of these two was the bonafide classic Spanish-British period sci-fi/horror corker *Horror Express* (aka *Panic in the Trans-Siberian Train*).

In 1906 haughty, insensitive anthropologist Alexander Saxon (Christopher Lee in peak snob-by-form) discovers a missing-link creature frozen in a block of ice in the mountains of China. Saxon ships the hairy thing across the country on the Trans-Siberian Express. The monster, possessed by a noncorporeal alien intelligence which uses human bodies as vessels to inhabit, wakes up, gets loose, and mucks various folks' brains dry so it can absorb the knowledge it needs to build a spaceship to get back to its home world. It's up to Saxon and his more humane rival Dr. Wells (played by the ever-excellent Peter Cushing in his second Sasquatch cinema outing) to thwart the evil extraterrestrial entity.

*Horror Express* gets by on the sheer basis of its tight narrative structure, its furiously busy and multi-charactered story, and its unrelenting head-long momentum.

But that's not all this wildly eventful and energetic cinematic grabbag has to offer; we also get:

- \*Eugenio Martin's punchy direction
- \*A damaged monk
- \*A crazy conclusion in which the out-of-control train hurtles towards a cliff while its starving passengers are terrorized by freshly revived zombies (?)
- \*John Cacavas' fantastically funky-ass score which comes complete with a burning, wah-wah-embossed fuzztone guitar riff and an eerie whistled theme worthy of Ennio Morricone
- \*A then-novel "body jump" premise which was later reused in a handful of 80s fright films (Carpenter's *The Thing*, *The Hidden*, *Shocker*, *The Horror Show*, *The First Power*, et al)
- \*A wonderfully witty rat-a-tat-tat rapport between Lee and Cushing as reluctant allies
- \*And a superb supporting cast which includes a splendorously frantic cameo by Telly Savalas as a loudish, overbearing Cosack cop (!), Albert de Mendoza (*Open Season*, *The People Who Own the Dark*) as a middlebrow police inspector, comely redhead soft-core sex movie regular Helga Liné as a bequiling spy, and Victor Israel (Spanish horror cinema's Mr. Cellophane) as an ill-fated train conductor.

*Horror Express* further deserves special kudos for directly addressing the ethical repercussions intrinsic to unearthing and subsequently proving the existence of the fabled missing link: When Lee accuses Lee's postulation that man naturally evolved from the apes as being "immoral," Lee coldly responds, "It's a fact—and there's no morality in a fact." This audacious subtext, specifically devised by screenwriters Armand D'Ussaux and Julian Haley to challenge

man's preconceived beliefs about his own evolution, clinches this pip's status as one of the all-time greats.

## Night of the Howling Beast

The yeti's second Spanish horror film appearance was in the delightfully bonkers gem *Night of the Howling Beast* (a.k.a. *Curse of the Beast, Horror of the Werewolf, The Hall of the Mountain King & The Werewolf vs. The Yeti*).

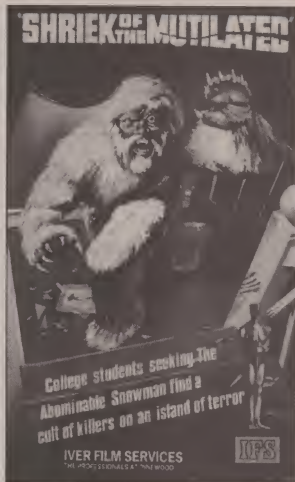
This fabulously flipped-out feature was the eighth and most outrageous entry in Paul Naschy's ongoing Waldemar Daninsky werewolf series.

The pic begins with a pre-credits yeti attack sequence. Naschy, as sullen and brooding as usual, joins an expedition in Tibet to search for the legendary snowman. Naschy gets lost during a storm, stumbles across a cave where two beautiful horny cannibalistic sorceress babes reside, has sex with the chicks, and snuffs them both out (but only after one honey gives him a bite that plants a werewolf curse on poor long-suffering Paul). Pretty soon Naschy's gettin' all hairy and homicidal whenever the moon becomes full, killing expedition members and brutish highway bandits with grisly abandon.

Naschy meets a wise, friendly monk who promises to remove the curse if Paul does the monk a little favor first: Paul has to dispose of both a wicked warlord and the warlord's especially vicious henchwoman, a malicious bitch who gets her warped jollies out of skinning lovely young ladies alive! Just when you think the movie couldn't get any loonier, the Abominable Snowman makes a belated appearance in the action-loaded last reel, abducting Paul's darling lady love. The Yeti and the Naschy's werewolf then engage in a ferocious claw-to-claw, thing-a-things, fur-and-fists-a-flyin' confrontation in the stomp-ass grand finale.

(This colossal face-off climax was later topped by erstwhile Incredible Hulk Lou Ferrigno's strenuously frenzied slow-motion grappling with a long-smouted, shaggy-haired, forest-dwelling Bigfootian humanoid monstrosity in Luigi Cozzi's *The Adventures of Hercules*. This scuffle in turn was surpassed by a classic duel of the titans fight between Bigfoot and the Loch Ness Monster on MTV's *Celebrity Death Match*, in which Nessie gruesomely cuts Sasquatch down to size with one swift swing of her lethal tail.)

Director Miguel Iglesias Bonnes treats all the silly supernatural shenanigans with gut-busting seriousness. Naschy's convoluted, insanely over-plotted script doesn't make a lick of sense. However, the lack of narrative coherence is more than made up for with a generous sprinkling of lurid sex and nudity, copious gory bloodshed, wall-to-wall mondo freako action, lovably crappy transformation flick, handsome scope cinematography, and a quick cameo by Victor Israel, Spanish horror cinema's shamefully unsung transparent man, as a scruffy mountain trail guide. Overall, it's a rib-bruising riot!



## Shriek of the Mutilated

Yeti Films experienced a significant nose-dive into the deepest recesses of unsalvageably bad movie hell with *Shriek of the Mutilated*.

Elderly college anthropology professor Ernest Press (stiffly played by former '30s feature bit actor Alan Brock) and four obnoxiously hip students journey to the remote Pacific coast sandbar of Booi Island to confirm whether stories about an Abominable Snowman inhabiting the woods have any basis in truth. The professor and his students stay at the home of Press' colleague Dr. Karl Werner (woodenly portrayed by Tawn

Ellis, best known as the star of '50s Grade-Z sci-fi film *Cat Women of the Moon*) with Werner's grunting Indian manservant Laughing Crow.

The yeti quickly starts making its vicious presence felt, randomly dispatching two students and causing the survivors to degenerate into blind panic. In a would-be shocking twist ending, the yeti proves to be a hoax, a ruse concocted by closet cannibals Press, Werner, and Laughing Crow to lure unsuspecting suckers to the island so they can kill and devour them.

Any movie which features Hot Butter's fluke instrumental hit "Popcorn," (it plays in its entirety during a college that party scene) can't be

good. This garbage qualifies as a crushing disappointment, considering the people involved:

•Co-writer Ed Allum (*Cream* magazine, *Invasion of the Blood Farmers*, *Blonde on a Bum Trip*)

•Co-writer Ed Kellerer (also *Invasion of the Blood Farmers*)

•Infamous porno roughie husband and wife team of Michael and Roberta Findley handled director and photography chores, respectively.

Moreover, the crappy mix of an unremittingly nihilistic tone, a disgustingly campy sense of humor ("On the prow/here and how/here comes the yeti now," sings one smart-ass collegian as he plays the piano), rotten gore effects, wretched acting, horrendous dialogue ("We're going to find it, photograph it, and prove to the world that this fabled beast exists"), and the cheesy gimmick of having a simulated hearstbeat pound away on the soundtrack whenever the yeti is about to attack thoroughly negate any fun or enjoyment this loser might have possessed. Next!

## Snowbeast

*Jaws* was a huge hit in 1975, so it comes as no surprise that at least one mid-'70s Sasquatch cinema outing was specifically made to capitalize on the meteoric success of the Spielberg smash. The only startling thing about the strictly bio-hum made-for-TV terror pic *Snowbeast* is the fact that it not just blatantly copies *Jaws*, but it copies William Goldie's derivative *Jaws-with-claws* *Grizzly* as well!

A huge, bulking, growling murderous yeti terrorizes a Colorado Rockies ski resort during an annual winter carnival. The resort's snippy little old lady owner (a severely wasted Sylvia Sydney) dismisses any possibility that an albino Bigfoot is on the attack and keeps things quiet so business won't be negatively affected.

But the owner's concerned grandson (played by chronically colorless *Wilderness* Family series star Robert Logan) decides to investigate the disappearance of a luckless skier and discovers that the creature is both very real and a serious risk to the resort's guests.

So Logan treks into the woods with a have-been ski champion (a sleepwalking Bo Svenson) and the stalwart sheriff (stolid Clint Walker) to hunt the sucker down.

Original *Psycho* scribe Joseph Stefano's by-the-numbers script flatly recycles the standard *Jaws* formula: a killing occurs, there's a cover-up, another killing happens, more panic ensues, and a motley assortment of guys join forces to take on the offending beastie. The showman premise isn't helped any by pedestrian direction, draggy pacing, a debilitating dearth of tension, soap opera-like characters and situations, a shushy scene, infrequent glimpses of the monster, tacky red-tinted freeze frames, and a predictable ending.

On the plus side, Annie McEnroe and Yvette Mimieux make for fair damsels in distress, the wintry mountainside scenery looks gorgeous, and Frank (*Corvette Summer*) Stanley's agile cinematography races well above the subpar material with its use of hand-held creature-cen-

ter-the-prow POV shots.

Unfortunately the flick's boob-tube berality ensures things never come to life and start cooking the way they should, thereby dooming this damp squid to outright mediocrity.

## Iceman

Most Abominable Snowman efforts are fatally undone by a crippling paucity of energy and enthusiasm. Not so with the over-the-top shot-in-Canada, Italian-made gut-buster *Iceman* (a.k.a. *Yeti - Giant of the 20th Century*).

It's a wildy ripe and vigorously morose wonder which reaches a stunning apogee in righteously overbaked, "what the hell's goin' on here?" crackpot excess and insanity. It's a monumental peak of pure jaw-dropping, outlandishly freaked-out, "why stink for the moon when ya can go for the rings of Saturn instead?" type brain-basting cinecraziness that many films aspire to, but often fall markedly short of hitting. Without a doubt, this dingbat delight rates as the Goliath of Sasquatch cinema and as such is absolutely essential viewing for self-respecting devout trash movie mongers.

A freighter ship crew discovers the body of a 30-foot yeti that resembles a '70s disco stud (complete with an overpumped jungle 'fro) perfectly preserved in a large chunk of ice. They devour the beast, jolt him back to life with electric charges, grossly mistreat him, and keep him caged in an enormous glass booth. Before you can say, "Hey, the filmmakers are obviously ripping off *Kong Kong*," our yeti breaks free of his cage, grabs the first luscious nubile blonde Euro vixen he lays eyes on (the gorgeous Phoenix Grant), and storms away with his new lady love. The yeti gets recaptured and flown to Toronto to be showed off to a gawking audience. Of course, he breaks free again, nabs the vixen, and goes on the expected stompin'-around-the-city rampage.

The dialogue is dubbed idiosyncrasy ("Philosophy has no place in science, professor"). The cheeseball special effects are a joy to behold (the horrendous blue screen work and flimsy toy miniatures are especially uproarious). The script fumbles things up in super heavy-handed fashion, even attempting to address a clunkily sincere "Is the yeti a man or a monster?" ethical debate.

Some flunky, off-beat touches add spice to the already succulently schlocky brew:

- The vixen accidentally breathes against one of the yeti's nipples, which causes it to harden and elicits a big, leering grin of approval from the lecherous behemoth (!)
- The vixen mends the yeti's wounded hand while he makes goo-goo eyes at her
- The yeti smashes windows with his feet while climbing down a towering office building
- The yeti breaks a man's neck with his toes (!)
- And, in the pic's single most innately off-the-wall moment, the tasty piece of Euro tail fantasizes about dancin' the horizontal mambo with a normal-sized yeti!

Yep, this one's a true unheralded classic

of just plain loco celluloid lunacy that's eminently worthy of a hard-core underground cult following.

## Ajouba Kudat Kaa

The yeti movie insanity continues with the cockeyed and hyper-kinetic "you gotta be shit-tin' me!" frenetic screwball Indian fantasy/horror/action thriller musical pandemonium *Ajouba Kudat Kaa*.

The movie begins on a misleadingly ordinary note with an expedition team discovering the yeti's cave in a remote mountainside area and promptly getting snuffed by the yeti for trespassing on his terrain. Then the pic makes an abrupt segue into standard kidnapping suspense territory with a bunch of scumballs abducting a little girl. The girl escapes from the scumballs and seeks refuge in the yeti's cave. The ass-yeti yeti — a big softie at heart — befriends the girl and takes care of her. The scumballs capture the yeti and put him in a cage. The little girl comes to the yeti's rescue.

The tone fluctuates from gritty tension to macho heroics to gruesome horror to silly kiddie mush without ever managing to create some kind of internal organic consistency. Ferocious martial arts fights erupt all over the frame with knock-ya-teeth-down-ya-throat abandon. And, since this is an Indian movie, we're treated to a few gratuitous song and dance numbers, which includes one remarkable sequence showing the little girl serenading the yeti with a sickeningly mawkish tune!

A top-drawer nutbag hoot.

## To Catch a Yeti

In the early '90s, at the height of the cutesy Bigfoot children's movie craze, there was one regrettably gooey made-for-Canadian-TV pic starring a disgustingly wimpy, mewling, loveable/huggable emasculated oversized teddy bear version of the Abominable Snowman. The film in question is the abysmal *To Catch A Yeti*, which scores a 10+ on the Vomitably Overextended Sappy Sentiment Scale.

Burly rocker Meatloaf snarls it up something grumpy as Big Jake Grizzly, a cocky game hunter who's hired by a multi-millionaire to capture a yeti for his spoiled son. The yeti eludes Big Jake's chutches and stows away on a plane that flies to America. Chantallene Keen is the sickeningly sweet little girl who befriends the yeti, whom the lass names Hank.

Big Jake and his bumbling assistant, Bhabber, nab Hank and take him to New York City. The little girl goes to the Big Apple to get Hank back.

Bob Keen, a special make-up Bx artist whose credits include *Hardware*, *Monkey Boy*, and the *Howler* films, made his sleep-at-the-wheel directorial debut with this senseless offal. In other words, *To Catch A Yeti* is anything but a good catch.

## in conclusion...

Whew, was that one hell of a long and crazy journey. Now, let me propose an idea for the ultimate Bigfoot pastiche film. Here's the basic set-up: Three tireless somewhere-out-in-the-sanity-zone wombat monster hunters Ivan Marx and Robert Morgan lead an expedition team to find Sasquatch. Dapper Peter Byrne and apologetic Rene Dahlsden tag along. Owlsh intellectual Grover Krantz shows off his beloved plaster cast of Bigfoot's enormous pawprint. Either the manically enthusiastic Donn Davison or the sonorously commanding Rod Serling — the consummate stoic Robert Stack or gravel-voiced Mr. Serious himself Leonard Nimoy will do in a pinch if neither of these two are available — perform narrator duties with their customary goggled-eyed fervor. The omnipresent Jamie Mendez-Nava would compose the shit-kickin', banjo-pluckin', harmonica-blastin' hillbilly bluegrass country score. A noble Native American

character explains the legend of Sasquatch around a campfire. During the trek into the woods the expedition runs across a backwoods Bigfoot worshipping religious cult. Said cock-eyed cult turn out to be a bunch of cannibals who feast on several team members. Bob Morgan literally has the shit scared out of him by Bigfoot when the huge fellow sneaks up on him while he's taking a dump behind a bush. Bigfoot rapes a female team member and knocks her up. After almost everyone has been brutally butchered by either Bigfoot or the cult, Bob Morgan, who this time is exposed as an embittered Vietnam veteran, decides to exact a grisly revenge all on his own. But he's too outnumbered to do it all by himself. So just when it seems like all is lost, either The Six Million Dollar Man or MacGyver — better yet, why not both of 'em? — come to the rescue and assist Morgan on his vengeful mission. After all is said and done, mangled bodies litter the forest. But Bigfoot has gotten away. And Bob Morgan, more determined than ever, vows to eventually get that sambitch. The end. ■



*The Beauties and the Beast*

## The Sasquatch Hunters: Finding Good Laughs in Witty Bigfoot Doc SPOOF by Joe Wawrzyniak

**H**ey you! Yeah, you buddy. Y'know, the person reading the Bigfoot article. Are you tired of reading about all those lousy, slapdash, poorly made trekkin' through the woods in search of Sasquatch documentaries which are just plain old laughably bad? Of course you are. Well, do you wanna read about a sharp, deadpan, pleasingly droll lampoon of said shitty docs that's intentionally amusing instead of unintentionally hilarious? Well, I'm sure you do. And, lucky us, there's a parody of those documentaries entitled *The Sasquatch Hunters* which gleefully spoofs all those key hokey ingredients that make those aforementioned docs the uniquely cheesy and entertainingly dopey crapoid delights that they are.

For starters, the pic pokes jolly fun at schlockmeister filmmakers in general by making the main character a Grade D blood'n'guts dreck horror flick hack director who decides to do a Bigfoot documentary. The doc is sponsored by a local beer company; gratuitous (and uproariously blatant) product plugs for the brew appear throughout the entire feature. Furthermore, the time is constantly shown on screen throughout the picture for no real apparent reason. The whole thing is shot in shaky, wobbly, vertigo-inducing, you-are-there immediate hand-held camera veritate fashion ala MTV's *The Real World*.

The spoof centers on three different Bigfoot true believer groups and their obsessive search for the legendary upright walking shagrug. The first group, simply called the Bigfoot Society, are a motley assortment of hopeless, pathetic dweebs which include a crippled, wheelchair-bound midget and a terminally besindred Heavy Metal dancer. The second group, the American Homind Association, are a government-financed team of arrogant "professional" snobs lead by a Robert Morganesque ramrod jerk. The third and debatably freakiest group, the Michigan Cryptozoological Society, are a truly nutso organization fronted by a flaky rich guy; these paramilitary kooks reside in a remote woodland redoubt and teach a form of martial arts patterned after Sasquatch! Then there's Dr. Prick, a stuffy, scholarly, studiously academic Grover Krantz-like scientist.

Moreover, we also got the expected greedy opportunistic businessman eagerly capitalizing on Bigfoot fever, the scoop-hungry TV media covering the scene, interviews with batty local yokels who claim to have seen Bigfoot, a nice send-up of the Patterson film, a tacky dramatic reenactment of a hunter's harrowing encounter with Bigfoot, and even a bunch of protesters who believe Uncle Sam's funding of Sasquatch research is a gross waste of money.

Sasquatch makes a dramatic last reel appearance being chased by the documentary filmmakers; Bigfoot runs into a UFO and takes off into the skies! This baby goes as far as to make Bigfoot out to be some portly schmoie in an abjectly obvious, crummy, not-convincing-for-a-second cut-rate gorilla suit and concludes with a neatly rollicking country-rock theme song. And, yes Virginia, it's okay to laugh at this one, for this time it's actually *supposed* to be funny. ■



# Bela Lugosi on Stage: by Katherine Orrison

*In Cult Movies #16, we first printed this account of Lugosi's stage performance in Arsenic and Old Lace, by co-star Helen Richman. We proudly present it again with different photos and updated information.*

## Arsenic and Old Lace

"I was the leading lady of my stock company at 19 because by that time I already had 14 years of training and experience," Helen Richman explains. "From the time I was tiny, I knew what I wanted to do, and what I'd need to do to become an actress." In my first play, at five, I played a grandmother! Starting in first grade, I begged for, and got lessons in tap dance, piano, and elocution. I knew I needed all those things to work towards my ultimate goal of being a top-notch character actress."

Helen Richman is a grandmother today, although she appears 20 years younger in both face and form, looking like a combination of Julie Andrews and Joanne Woodward. A picture over her desk shows the teenage gamine that beguiled audiences and fellow actors Bela Lugosi and Helen's future husband Peter Mark Richman, in plays like *Arsenic and Old Lace*, *The Rose Tattoo*, and *A Streetcar named Desire*.

In grammar school Helen — then with the name of Teddi — went to band rallies and defense plant tours tap dancing and singing for the war effort.

"While I was still in junior high school, instead of going off to camp, I asked to apprentice with summer stock companies. An apprentice had to pay the company, not the other way around. In exchange, we received on-the-job training in props, set construction, understudy work, and roughly an hour-a-day lesson in voice and movement."

"My first year of apprenticeship was in Fishkill, New York, roughly 60 miles south of Albany where I lived — oo Hollywood Avenue, I'll have you know! I placed with an equity company and spent the summer cueing, watching, and learning from the other actors."

It was in Fishkill, near Hyde Park, that Helen had the honor of meeting Eleanor Roosevelt when the First Lady attended a play starring Faye Emerson.

"I was so scared and excited. I got to usher her to her seat! It was like meeting the queen! Afterwards, she extended an invitation to the entire company to swim at Hyde Park. I still have the picture of Eleanor and



me in our bathing suits by the water."

Not only were the Roosevelts charming and hospitable to everyone (apprentices included) but they had a cake baked for Faye Emerson's birthday.

"Those teenage summers at the Fishkill Playhouse, and later in Brattleboro, Vermont, were months of very hard work, learning lines, thinking about it, then going out and doing it! My second year, with actor Malcolm Atterbury's company, I apprenticed with a 14-year-old named Anthony Perkins."

Did anyone have an idea Tony Perkins was going on to a big career?

"Well, everyone knew he was Osgood Perkins' only son — that was a big deal. That and the fact that at only 14, Tony was very professional, very serious about his work, and mature beyond his years. We worked in *Kiss and Tell* together — my first real part as Corless. Tony played Dexter."

Winters found Helen becoming a drama major at Ithica College, a good strong school with a progressive approach to acting.

"I made the mistake of transferring to Syracuse, New York for one term. They were teaching us to clench our fists to denote anger. I thought, 'Oh, dear, I can't do this.' It was back to Ithica for me, where I was trained in scene design, playwriting, fencing, modern dance and voice and diction. I loved every moment."

It was between Helen's freshman and sophomore college years that she graduated to leading lady in George Snel's Green Hills Theater in Reading, PA.

Just how did a Star Stock Company operate, I wanted to know.

"First, the chosen script with the Star's blocking was sent to owner/director Snell. In Bela Lugosi's case, the play was *Arsenic and Old Lace*, with Bela playing 'Jonathan' (the part originated by Boris Karloff on Broadway and played by Raymond Massey in the 1944 Frank Capra film.)

"After the company had rehearsed for a few days with the script blocking, the advance man appeared roughly two to three

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days ahead of the star. This guy assumed the role of the star and basically took over directing us. Our movements and marks were the most important thing to him. We'd better hit the right spot! Then Sir or Madam Star arrived one day before the opening.

"Rehearsal began that day very early in the morning, and went until late at night. All the kinks were worked out. We did it over and over until everyone — the star, players, and crew — felt comfortable.

"Then, opening night, you went out and DID it. Big and loud, for all the world to see. And for the most part, the stars were very nice people, working hard at their craft, out there slugging away. I did *Mr. Belvedere* with Arthur Treacher, and his first words to me were: 'Do you know your words, child?'

Helen was still a teenager, after all, even though in *Arsenic and Old Lace*, she was playing one of the two pixilated old ladies holding funerals in the basement.

"The first time I saw Bela in person, my girlfriend (who was playing the other old lady) and I were standing on a country road and he was walking towards us. And I thought, 'There he is! And I must not be frightened.' I had nothing to be scared of; he was charming and warm, not pretentious at all. But, even off stage, he had tremendous presence."

And on stage?

"On stage, from the first rehearsal, Bela certainly knew how to be a mean and evil Jonathan. That tremendous presence he had worked overtime on stage. Any scene with him was a strong moment. He pulled everybody up to his level. He was dynamic, charismatic, and evoked fear in the audience with almost no effort."

And Bela off stage was a bit of a surprise...

"I remember his son was with him. Very young, only 13 or 14 I think, but no wife. As I understood it, Bela and his wife were separated and in the process of divorcing. There's a point in the play where the two old ladies change from tea dresses to

widow's weeds, and it was during that change, in the dark, in the small, cramped wings, that I felt Bela's lips running up and down my back while I was in the process of changing costumes."

The play was in progress only a foot away. Helen couldn't speak — nor did she want to. She simply moved away as quickly and judiciously as possibly and went back out on stage.

"I was in utter shock. Nothing like that had ever happened to me before. I decided to put it from my mind and I concentrated doubly hard on my role."

Spoiled the likes of Arthur Treacher, who always insisted on Helen's mother or father accompanying them whenever they worked together, Helen was due for another surprise later in the week:

"Bela never spoke of our brief encounter afterwards. For several nights we did the play, and I rehearsed for the next one in the mornings. As I recall, Bela came and watched rehearsal several mornings and we had lunch afterwards. And I'll never forget exactly what he said: 'I would like you to tour with me as Lucy in *Dracula*. And before I could say yes or no: 'Of course, you would have to be my baby!'"

Well, so much for that day's lunch. Whatever did Helen think?

"Whatever did Theodora Landess think — that was my stage name then. Well, I can remember exactly what I thought: 'All my life I've worked hard to be a good actress, but not at this price!'

"I tried to close the conversation as diplomatically as possible. I told him I'd have to think about it. Over and over again through my stock company years, we had been told too never impose on or upset the star performers. We always strove to treat them with the utmost respect. That's why I didn't make a scene the first night in the wings and that's why I stalled for time to think of an appropriate answer. And later on in the week, I simply said, 'Thank you, I won't be able to tour with you. I feel I need to

stay here and continue studying.' To this day, I've never forgotten Bela's penetrating look. The very thought of it..."

Had Helen done *Dracula* on tour with Mr. Lugosi, in all likelihood it was the version that director Tod Post directed in the early '50s that is spoken of in the beginning of the film *Ed Wood*. When I asked Mr. Post about it, he had a vivid memory as well.

"Somber. That's how I perceived Bela. Dignified to the nth degree and very serious about his work." (Helen Richman used the identical word when I asked for a one-word description: "Somber.")

"But I was in for a surprise," Ted continues. "Something I never could have predicted. During rehearsals for *Dracula*, I was invited to appear at a Lions Club luncheon and, quite impulsively, I asked Bela if he'd like to go with me. He said he'd be delighted. And after I'd gotten up and said a few words, I introduced Bela. Well, Lugosi gets up — remember we'd been rehearsing. I hadn't seen him yet in front of a live audience. He gets up and talks for 45 minutes to an hour and has the entire place in HYSTERIC! It was a revelation, to me and everyone, how funny he could be. People were running from the room because they'd laughed so long and hard they were literally peeing in their pants!"

It's something for revisionist historians to consider, who claim Bela had no sense of comic timing, or command of the English language. Forty-five years later, can Ted remember anything that Bela said?

"No. It's just too long ago. It was strictly off-the-cuff. A lot of unexpected one-liners and stories about the early days of theater in Hungary. Very honest, very real, very emotional stories. Some timely observations. Why didn't I tape record it? I've regretted it ever since. But I can tell you he never told any stories that were off-color in any way. He revealed himself to be an enormously worldly and sophisticated man with a very dry, almost sly sense of humor. People were coming up to me for weeks afterwards, raving about how funny Bela was and how much they'd enjoyed him. And these were Bela's peers, usually a very tough audience."

I asked both Ted and Helen about any problems, at this point in Bela's life, with drinking or drugs.

"No," Helen says. "He was very professional. I recall one of the apprentices telling me about numerous liquor bottles being taken out of Bela's dressing room, but there was no evidence during a performance. He was too serious about his work for that."

"I understand why that man took drugs," Ted Post says. "I asked him, after the luncheon,



why he didn't consider returning to Europe and the Hungarian theater. And he said, 'To go back now would be very hard. I really can't go back, you know?' And I knew. From what I understood when we talked about it, Bela was unhappy with how Hungary had gone politically both before and after World War II. I think things would have been 'hor' for him if he'd returned. What a complex, tortured man he was. With maybe a quarter of his talent being utilized here in the United States.

Meanwhile, Helen Richman went on to a total of seven stock seasons altogether, doing everything from *Desdemona* to *Stella*; *The Lady's Not For Burning* to *Blithe Spirit*. It was when she was signed for a 14-week season at the Grove Theater that her life took a BIG turn.

"I thought, 'Another company of typical, boring actors.' I was here to work, not flirt. I didn't even bother to go and meet the 'new actor' who arrived a week late. Not until he knocked on my dressing room door after that evening's performance of *Glad Tidings* to tell me I was 'very good.' And here stands this gorgeous guy. Who was to become my husband, Peter Mark Richman.

"We started going together after *The Rose Tattoo*, and he proposed after *Anna Christie*. It was terrifically romantic, but I didn't accept right away. I was in Sarasota, Florida, appearing at the Palm Tree Playhouse for Stuart Lancaster when I suddenly thought, 'Yes,' and called Peter Mark to accept. It was something I felt 'in my gut,' as actors say."

Peter Mark took over Steve McQueen's

role of Johnny in *A Hatful of Rain* on Broadway, and Helen, when the first of her children began arriving had to make a very serious choice.

"I devote myself totally to what I'm doing. When I'm acting everything I have goes into being the best I can be. When I became a mother, I devoted myself totally to that. I couldn't pull myself two ways without one or the other suffering. So I chose to be the best wife and mother possible."

She retreated from acting for a time. "But now my life has come full circle. I'm back to my initial love of the theater. I'm directing my husband in a marvelous play he wrote. Our children are grown and active in the arts. I can't tell you how fulfilling it is to be creative again." ■

## Helen Richman • The Latest

With *Cult Movers*' decision to re-print actress Helen Richman's interview—originally given at the time Tim Burton's *Ed Wood* opened eight years ago, I have had an opportunity to get caught up with Helen's full and busy life.

Actress Helen and actor Peter Mark Richman celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary on May 10th, 2003 (Giving the lie to the cliché that life in Hollywood fosters broken relationships and traumatized childhoods). Helen and Peter Mark have lived in Southern California since moving here in 1955 for Peter Mark's appearance in *Friendly Persuasion* and successfully raised five children. All the children are artistic, and musically inclined. Son Lucas Richman is the resident conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and has been asked back as guest conductor of the New York Philharmonic.

Daughter Kelly and husband Loren (a voice-over actor that her father introduced her to) have given Helen and Peter Mark three granddaughters. In addition, Kelly has started her own art studio making art plates for museums across the country.

Sons Orion and Roger have segued into film-making with their collaboration with director Mays Kallahan (*Pool Hall Junkies*) on a documentary on home cooking shows based on Orion's experiences presenting cook-ware at shows in Las Vegas. Oldest son Howard has become a music teacher of renown, his specialty being classical piano.

Patric Mark Richman is writing his memoirs after winning an award-winning one-man play *Four Faces* and filming it with director Ted Post.

And Helen? She is currently appearing for the second year in a row in *The Virginia Monologues* at Los Angeles' Pierce College—which continues a six-decade cycle of stage work that began when she was a teenager and Bela Lugosi's leading lady in *Arcane* and *Old Lace*.



Helen &amp; Peter Mark

# NEW LIGHT on *Dark Eyes of London*

## Part 1

by Frank J. Dello Stritto & Andi Brooks

(Editor's Note: As our regular readers know, Cult Movies Press recently published its first book, *Vampire Over London - Bela Lugosi in Britain*, dealing with Lugosi's last, forgotten stage tour as Dracula. The book deals mainly with those overlooked eight months of 1951, when Lugosi toured throughout the British provinces, and then filmed *Mother Riley Meets The Vampire* before returning to America. Authors Frank Dello Stritto and Andi Brooks include in their book the behind-the-scenes stories of Lugosi's two earlier British films, *Mystery of the Mary Celeste* (1935) and *Dark Eyes of London* (1939, aka *The Human Monster*). These are "flashback chapters" cleverly woven into the story of 1951. Though the stage tour is the main focus of *Vampire Over London*, Dello Stritto and Brooks did extensive research on those two films, and located and interviewed several members of the production teams. Below is an extract from *Vampire Over London*, dealing with the difficult years between the filming of *Mystery of the Mary Celeste* and *Dark Eyes of London*, when a British ban of horror movies all but destroyed Lugosi's career.)

**O**n August 21, 1935, the S.S. *Majestic* docked in New York with Lillian and Bela onboard. They were returning fresh from filming *Mystery of the Mary Celeste* for Hammer Pictures in England. Asked as always about starring in horror films, Bela mused to the waiting reporters:

"It's a good business, so I can buy steamship tickets, give tips and invite the boys for a drink. If I wouldn't make such pictures - maybe trash - I couldn't do it."

The premiere of *Mystery of the Mary Celeste* was some months off, and the small throng of fans and interviewers had to take his word as he enthused about the "wonderful story" and his role as "a kindly derelict...the most lovable fellow." The ending of the whodunit is not too surprising, but Bela gave it away as he boasted

ed "Why, I'm killing about seven people and everybody will love me!"

The Lugosis hurried on to Hollywood to sort out their many film offers, and, they hoped, to launch Bela's own production company. Filming on *The Invisible Ray*, Lugosi's third co-starring film at Universal with Boris Karloff, would begin in mid-September. Until then Bela busied himself with setting up his first venture as filmmaker, and boldly announced his plans to produce and star in 10 to 12 historical romances. His reason, he said, was that:

"Every time I get my thoughts centered on a role that I believe fits me, some other actor - and always great actors - get there first. So what am I to do? I figured out that one, so now I'll finance my own company and star in pictures that I want to play in."

A few weeks before in England he had failed to convince Alexander Korda to cast him as Cyrano de Bergerac (Charles Laughton got the part, but the film was never made). In 1932 he had tried to land the title role in MGM's *Rasputin And The Empress*, which went instead to Lionel Barrymore.

His company's first film was to be "Cagliostro," a biography of the 18th century Sicilian charlatan who held sway at the court of Louis XVI. A script by Andre de Soto was optioned, and an agent, Al Kingston, dispatched to New York to arrange financing. "Cagliostro," probably never had a chance. Outside of horror, Lugosi was a questionable commodity; and his lack of business savvy was well known. Costume period dramas were expensive to produce and had spotty track records. Many of those

# New Light on *Dark Eyes of London*

## cont'd.

that attempted to repeat the success of *The Private Life of Henry VIII* had failed at the box office.

In England, another film about Cagliostro, to be based on a script by Curt Siodmak, was looking for backers, and the trade journals carried tales of its progress. The availability of two Cagliostro scripts ensured that neither would be filmed. Not until 1948 would the Sicilian appear on screen, portrayed by Orson Welles, another great actor in another less than great film.

After September 1935, no film was heard of Lugosi's "Cagliostro," or his film company. Financing was simply beyond his grasp.

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*The Invisible Ray*, completed in October 1935, was mild stuff compared to the earlier Karloff-Lugosi films at Universal. No torture chambers or embalming racks; no disfigurements or human sacrifices. Science fiction replaces devil worship and obsession with Edgar Allan Poe. The slightest touch from Karloff's radioactive character is deadly, and his murders are distinctly non-violent. In quite a contrast to their harrowing deaths in their previous films together, Janus Rulph (Karloff) corners Felix Benet (Lugosi) and quietly says, "It will be easier to shake hands. It will all be over in a second." Indeed it is, but not before Bela steals the scene with an exquisite death gasp. Otherwise, Karloff gives the more flamboyant performance. By comparison Bela is the model of restraint. How much of the new tamedness could be attributed to the growing pressure on producers to tone down horror can only be guessed.

The two stars no longer shared equal billing. Karloff's name came first as always, but advertisements clearly listed Bela as a supporting player. Nothing in Bela's recent track record merited the demotion. His latest films, good and bad, had done well, and he ranked as high as he ever would be in film popularity polls. *Mystery* praised his performance in the as-yet unreleased *Mystery of the Mary Celeste*. Most likely, the name and face most intimately tied to horror was intentionally pushed into the background.

One by one, the film offers before Bela evaporated. In Britain, financial realities closed in on the cash-strapped studios, and none of the roles mentioned while Bela was filming *Mystery of the Mary Celeste* materialized. A starring role in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* was announced in October and cancelled in November; the remake never reached the cameras. About the same time the Lammies, as always floating on a sea of credit, defaulted on loans and lost control of Universal. Their studio's schedule for 1936 productions fell into disarray. *Bluebeard* and *The Suicide Club*, both mentioned throughout 1935 as Karloff-Lugosi co-stars to follow-up *The Invisible Ray*, were dropped before that movie was even released.

In January 1936 Bela at last landed a good non-horror role, as a master spy in Republic's *House Of A Thousand Candles*, but had to leave the picture due to a severe cold (or perhaps an

early, unexpected round of attacks from "the lightning pains"). The other Hollywood studios followed Universal's retreat from horror, and the star in such demand only a few months prior simply had no other film offers.

All that was left on Bela's schedule was a reprise on his great role in the long-awaited sequel to *Dracula*. His contract was signed for *Dracula's Daughter*, and the studio was obligated to pay his salary; but the start of filming faced delay after delay. The script was worked and reworked as it had been for almost a year. How could a *Dracula* tale be told without inciting the censors? The answer finally came that *Dracula* himself would not be in the film; the story would deal only with the daughter's tragic struggle against his curse. Bela was dropped from the project, and collected his \$4,000 simply for posing for a few publicity photos with Gloria Holden, who won the title role of the film.

Bela put the best face on these misfortunes. The loss of film work in England was attributed to his love for his dogs. He could not bear, he claimed, to leave them behind or place them in British quarantine, though he had done one or the other a few months before. He may have been genuinely ecstatic about his exit from *Dracula's Daughter*. "Dracula is dead and the chief celebrant at the obsequies is Bela Lugosi," crowed a publicity release. "Dracula is dead and Lugosi, who created the monster, hopes that all memories of Dracula will die, too."

Within the film studios and casting offices, the memory of Lugosi was dying as well. Universal had an option on him for one more film, and gave him a small role in *Postal Inspector*. That and appearances in two Saturday morning serials, *Shadow of Chinatown* and *S.O.S. Coast Guard*, were his only film work for almost three years. Hollywood had shelved horror and Bela along with it.

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In Britain, the push to reform the film rating system cooled as movie-makers turned away from horror. Edward Shortt, the aggressive president of the British Board of Film Censors who issued increasingly anti-horror statements during the Lugosi's month in London, contracted influenza and died of complications in November 1935, at age 73. His successor, Lord Tyrrell, 69, presided over Shortt's policies. Studios feared the threatened censorship restrictions, and the number of A-rated films dropped drastically in the early months of 1936. Cinema attendance fell as well as the movie business felt more than ever the economic depression. Still, Lord Tyrrell could claim a victory of sorts. At a meeting of the Cinema Exhibitors Association in June 1936, the same annual meeting where a year before Edward Shortt denounced horror films, Tyrrell announced:

"...the 'horrific' film has gone. Local licensing authorities throughout the country declared that they were determined not to allow the exhibition of these films in their cinemas under their jurisdiction, and in view of the fact

that the Board has always considered such films to be unwholesome, the horrific 'category' has now ceased to exist..."

The statement displeased the various civic and religious groups urging tighter film censorship. They had forced a 'horrific' classification into the film rating system in 1933. A reluctant BBFC used it rarely, and now had unilaterally dropped it under the guise of a so-called triumph. Displeasure turned to fury as Tyrrell's speech continued:

"...The suggestion that there should be such a classification was no doubt well-meant, but it was never considered desirable by the Board, although we gave way to the determined pressure of the few that it should be instituted and given a trial. Those who advocated this innovation have come to the conclusion that it was wrong in principle and that the Board was correct..."

The BBFC might have contained the outrage incited among the reformers, had not the releases of *Dracula's Daughter* and *Revel of the Zombies* (both nominal sequels to two of Lugosi's biggest hits) followed quickly. The same editors of the cinema trade journals that carried the text of Tyrrell's address also ran, a few pages later, schedules of exhibitors' screenings for the latest horror films from America. More than coincidence may have at work. The trade journals were the most outspoken opponents of film censorship and might have seized an opportunity to embarrass the imperious BBFC. Tyrrell's pronouncement and its reporting by the trade backfired on all concerned. The reformers rose not so much against the BBFC, as in appeal to a higher power, the many local county councils that actually had final say in what reached the screens. One by one, the LCCs joined the call not only for continuing the horrific 'classification,' but elevating it to a separate 'category,' like Adult or Universal.

Tyrrell and the BBFC had no alternative but to retreat. Wedged between the reformers and the LCCs on one side, and the film makers and exhibitors on the other, the BBFC's only power lay in convincing each that it held some sway the other. Through the summer of 1936, the BBFC scrambled to regain the moral high ground before rebuilding the delicate balance that Tyrrell had unwittingly tipped.

As the battle over film censorship raged through 1936, the film that most provoked the reformers was *Dracula's Daughter*. Universal's distributor in Britain, GFD (which also handled Hammer's *Mystery of the Mary Celeste*) stressed that the new vampire tale was "not a horror film." If Universal did try to tone down its last horror film, it failed miserably. *Dracula's Daughter* is now famous for the lesbian overtones in its two woman-on-woman vampire attacks. Tactful by modern standards, but strong stuff indeed in the mid-1930s. Perhaps what really outraged the reformers was the ascent of female monsters in American films. An exclusively male fraternity until a year before, the fiends from Hollywood in the last year included *Luna in Mark of the Vampire*, *Malina in The Devil Doll* and the title characters in *Bride of Frankenstein*, *She*, and now *Dracula's Daughter*.

When the all-important London County

CUIT MOVIES

Council threw its support to the reformers in October – perhaps by coincidence on Halloween – was the war over. The decree was final and virtually became the law of the land: as of January 1, 1937, no one under 16 could legally view a "horrific" film in Britain. All horror film production had ceased in Hollywood months before. While the deficit of make-believe horror grabbed a few headlines, the advance of another horror went under-reported in the press. Earlier in 1936, Adolf Hitler sent German troops to occupy the Rhineland. His open defiance of the Treaty of Versailles sparked celebrations in Germany, but was scarcely noticed by its once and future foes.

On November 2, 1936, the very day of the official announcement of the new "horrific" category, Hamilton Deane brought his original stage version of *Dracula* to the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre in London for a one week engagement. His days of continuous travelling repertory, 48 weeks a year, were well past; and most of his old plays had been retired as too old-fashioned. Comfortably retired, he still looked for the odd acting assignment. His *Dracula*, too, was now old-fashioned, familiar stuff, and the London critics avowed it as always. But the critic for *The Stage* admitted that:

"Each time the curtain fell upon an act we looked around, and, behold, the entire audience seemed to be dissolved in happy laughter. They were applauding enthusiastically, but they had evidently been far more amused than alarmed. Indeed, the sole effect of the nightmare seemed to be a thoroughly rollicking evening for all concerned."

*The Times* only half agreed:

"Though there was plenty of laughter during the intervals, the audience found it easy to remain serious while the play was in progress."

The laughter bothered Deane not at all. He often joked about his masterpiece. By 1936 he accepted the bittersweet truth that somewhere, sometime, there was always one more paycheck to be wrung from *Dracula*.

The Lugosi's only child was born in Los Angeles in January 1938. Except for the rare personal appearance or radio spot, Bela had not worked in months. He had no prospects. His and Lillian's lifestyle, their home, their car vanished, and still nothing on the horizon.

He was not alone in his despair. Many in the movie industry felt the pinch of the tough economy and the downturn in movie attendance. One of them was Eric Ullmann, owner of the Regina Theatre in Los Angeles. In the August heat of southern California, before the age of air-conditioning, he needed a gimmick to draw patrons into his theater. For minimal rental fees, he put together a triple bill of *Dracula*, *Frankenstein* and *Son of Kong* for a split week, and ran them continuously under the banner "We Dare You To See Them Together." Thousands took the dare. Ticket lines snaked around the block; and extra shows were added that kept the Regina open into the wee hours of the morning.

The local press soon picked on the sensa-

tion at the Regina, and raved in particular of "the ovation that greets the appearance of Bela Lugosi in *Dracula*. Lugosi has been all but forgotten in Hollywood, though he has been with us all the time."

The old horrors ran almost a month at the Regina. They might have played longer; but the Regina soon had competition as other theatres hurried to book them. Universal issued new prints of its two seminal classics, and audiences across America joined what became a celebration of *Dracula* & *Frankenstein*, and Lugosi & Karloff. Some theatres played *Dracula* or *Frankenstein* separately or with another film, and saw nothing like the success of the two horrors together.

The double bill was the hottest attraction at west coast theatres over the Labor Day weekend, taking in more at the box office in two days than in a typical week. Reports of new house records became routine as the phenomenon spread north and east. The Rivoli Theatre in Portland claimed triple its normal business. In Salt Lake City, 5,000 people jammed the street outside the Victory, prompting the manager to rent the Broadway Theatre across the street. Through the night, films reels shuffled between the theatres as the movies played simultaneously.

From Seattle to Denver to Kansas City to Newark, the double bill of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* was the highest grossing attraction in memory. They at last reached New York in late October and played to outstanding business through Halloween and into November.

Universal re-released its other horror classics on double bills. Only *Bride of Frankenstein* and *Dracula's Daughter* came close to matching the success of the originals. In early October the studio announced plans for a new horror film, *Son of Frankenstein*, and cast Karloff, Lugosi and two other prominent screen villains, Basil Rathbone and Lionel Atwill. Filming started a few weeks later. The rush to cash in on horror shows in the original script, a grisly, unsatisfying tale of child abduction and murder. Director Rowland Lee and his four stars scraped what they were handed, and refashioned something more suited to them and their audience. Each actor carved out with a choice part that ideally suited his talents. Karloff himself removed his dialogue, which he thought a mistake in *Bride of Frankenstein*, and still shone as the mute, confused, brain-damaged Monster.

All the stars excel, but the true surprise of *Son of Frankenstein* is Bela Lugosi's performance as a character so different from his familiar screen personas. Ygor is the antithesis of the elegant Count Dracula – rotten teeth and mangy hair, dressed in rags and crippled by a broken neck (he was hanged for grave-robbing, but survived). About all the two characters share is a penchant for spicing their speech with ominous puns. Offered a drink, Dracula intones "I never drink...wine." Asked why the Monster left their hiding place, Ygor answers "He was...hunting."

Lugosi exploits the broken-neck wildly. He raps on it to show how it has healed, complains of the bone scraping in his throat, and lets the syllables squeeze out as if opening a creaking door. No doubt about the prey when Ygor fingers

on "hunting." As with *Dracula*, Lugosi keeps Ygor on the edge of absurdity – carried further either character becomes a parody. But Lugosi elevates them to surreal figures, and no audience can look away.

*Son of Frankenstein* fulfilled all expectations and became a huge hit when released in January 1939. Hollywood horror films were back and Karloff and Lugosi were again in hot demand. Universal signed Bela to a five-year, one-picture-per-year contract. The film industry had recovered from its doldrums; 1939 would be a prosperous year and other studios called him. One offer came from a small company near London, looking to make what was sure to be Britain's first domestically produced H-rated film.

Horror film's renaissance was not a solely American event; but the British first dealt with real monsters. As *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* stormed across the United States, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain returned from negotiations with Adolf Hitler and proclaimed "Peace In Our Time." The price was agreeing to Germany's annexation of the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia. The crowds that greeted Chamberlain cheered, but many in Britain knew that war was imminent.

A mild diversion from the horrors to come came in early November 1938, when two double-bills of old movies opened in English cinemas. The Odeon in Bristol ran *The Old Dark House* and *The Invisible Man*; the Coventry Street Rialto in London ran *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*. Both theatres boasted of the H-ratings as badges of honor. The Odeon ran ads boldly proclaiming an "All-Thriller" program and the "erie nature of the films." Mimicking the American ad campaign for *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, the Rialto dared people to attend.

Soon, as the two films' huge success was repeated, Universal's distributor, GFD, ran ads bragging "We dare you to book these two pictures and show them to one programme! Can your patrons take it?" As in America, stories of the double bill's phenomenal success, despite brutal January winter, flooded the trade journals.

British cinema managers, probably more so than their American counterparts, indulged in outlandish lobby displays and promotional props to lure patrons.

*Dracula* and *Frankenstein* received their full treatments. Trocadero Art Studios in London received urgent calls to fashion life-size models of the monsters. One of its customers was The Coliseum Theatre in Manor Park. "Dracula" made a personal appearance at the opening, after his coffin was driven around town for hours. Inside the cinema, as Van Helsing drives the stake into Dracula on the screen, "fireworks" exploded in the theatre to herald the event. The lobby became a "haunted castle," complete with dancing skeletons and the uniformed nurses traditional for "Dracula" stage performances.

Usherettes dressed as nurses or in funeral shrouds were common gimmicks, as were *Dracula* & *Frankenstein* "ambulances" or "hearses." These "radio delivery vans," usually adorned with a coffin or a monster model, broad-

cast a theatre's offering as they drove the streets. One of them did its best to entertain crowds shivering in long lines outside The Plaza in Coventry. The Regal in Kettering ran a contest for a teenage girl who would sit alone through the double bill at a midnight show of the two movies. The Regal also featured "a real Frankenstein" - a local inventor's robot that could walk, talk and deliver a 100,000 volt jolt to trespassers. The Tonic in Bangor (Northern Ireland) featured a "ghost organist" between features, and ran a dual of local regulations by extinguishing all houselights while the movies played. The mayor of Bangor attended one of the dark shows, enjoyed the added eeriness, but later had to support the complaints filed by those who found total darkness disconcerting.

In the wake of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* wake came a mad rummaging for old horror films to place in double bills. Some had never come to Britain on their first runs; and most had never been reclassified under the new system. The BBFC quickly put them through the process. Virtually all received the expected H-rating. The LCCs noted the popularity of the revivals; and many councils called meetings to reassess their position on horrific films. None changed their stances of 1936, and issued re-affirmations that within their districts, no one under 16 could see an H-film. Some districts forbade individual horror films entirely. *Frankenstein* in Belfast, *Bride of Frankenstein* in Jersey. Appeals only resulted in statements confirming the bans. In February 1939 came the new film, *Son of Frankenstein*, only a month after its American release. It drew an H-rating, but also enthusiastic trade reviews. It opened to excellent business in March.

Dick Gordon was a few weeks short of his thirteenth birthday when the excitement over *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* took hold in Britain. With his parents and his older brother Alex, he went to the Coventry Street Rialto to see them. As a family, the Gordons had never confronted a H-film. Few films had actually been rated horrific since the category had been created two years before. The family was politely but firmly told that the older son Alex, 16, could see the show; but Dick could not. Dick quietly went to a U-rated film playing nearby while his brother and parents saw the horror double bill. For Dick, as for many boys thus turned away, the defeat was only temporary. A few weeks later, he and a school chum slipped into a theatre showing the movies in West Ruislip, where the chum's mother knew an usherette.

British film and theatre producers looked to exploit the new craze while it lasted. The bloated film industry had collapsed two years before. With the generally weak economy, financing films was much harder than in 1935. England had a few homegrown horrors that could be quickly mobilized. Tod Slaughter, master villain of barnstorming Victorian melodramas, returned to the studios to make *The Face At The Window*, and Hamilton Deane could always be tapped for a stage version of *Dracula*.

Deane was in London in *Dracula*, Hamilton Deane had tried to keep his life and career much like they had been before. The coming of sound films, the economic depression, the shifting popular taste and his own advancing years forced a new world on him. *Dracula* invaded that world, as he had invaded Bela Lugosi's, and his life could never be the same.

In February 1927 *Dracula* opened on the West End with Deane's touring company in the same roles they had played in the provinces. The play ran 13 months, but Deane stayed only two. By late spring he and a few of his players were back on tour. Deane's partners in the London production were not so anxious to leave; and some hard feelings resulted when *Dracula* remained in the West End after Deane's departure. One offshoot was multiple *Dracula* productions - some using Deane's play; some using a script commissioned by Florence Stoker (which therefore cut Deane out of any royalties). The bad blood cooled slowly. One by one the various competing companies folded. By 1929, Deane again had a virtual monopoly with *Dracula* on the British stage.

Despite the professional squabbles and the growing dissatisfaction with playing the same part so often, Deane was back where he loved to be: again on the road, again moving from engagement to engagement in his shiny white Austin car. By nature outgoing and fun-loving, he left driving his "travelling mansion," so a member of his troupe while he himself sped ahead in his sporty Albert car "Pat" - his leading lady and partner, Dora Mary Patrick - doubled as the caravan's caterer. At each new city, they camped in a wood on a river. He attributed his ability to maintain his tiring touring schedule to his bucolic accommodations. Royalties from *Dracula* productions in America and the sale of the film rights to Universal added to his already comfortable nest egg. He occasionally reminded his interviews that Florence Stoker "has benefited very considerably by the payment of fees."

The passing years brought increasing difficulty in booking the Hamilton Deane Company for a full season. *Dracula* allowed him to delay the demise of travelling repertory. Deane used his one famous play to open up new markets. As time passed, he felt less like *Dracula's* master than his slave. Those times were slowly passing him by. He derided "the tea-cup and saucer set plays which have been in vogue so long," and predicted a return to "strong drama. I don't mean the type of melodrama which was touring when I came into the business."

"Strong drama" included a new stage version *Frankenstein*, which he produced from an adaptation by Peggy Webling. Deane played the Monster. He hoped that it would be a second *Dracula*, but it never was. Even in Derby, where Deane always enjoyed good press and where he had premiered *Dracula* four years before, the local critic doubted *Frankenstein* would be a success. Deane himself gathered rather excellent notices. A reviewer in Leeds thought the piece "crude melodrama...which contains much needless repetition and flat dialogue; and...characters completely unconvincing."

"...But Mr. Hamilton Deane's acting is

superb; it fills the whole theatre with a sense of the macabre. When he is on the stage, we surrender ourselves entirely to the impossible spell; the incredible becomes credible because it is shown to be artistically true."

At Deane's side in *Frankenstein*, as she had been in *Dracula*, was Pat. In both the provincial and West End productions, her Katrine attempts to befriend the Monster, only to be killed accidentally. That moment alone of the play survives in the classic Universal film with Boris Karloff and Colin Clive.

The times were against a touring production of *Frankenstein*. The 1928-1929 season was disastrous for the travelling companies. Deane, apparently in all seriousness, attributed the bad business to the public's despondency over King George V's ill health; but he also lambasted the new competition from sound films. "Once the 'talkies' have lost their attraction as a novelty, they will never become more than a particular kind of entertainment," he told an interviewer in 1929 "the 'talkies' can never be regarded as more than 'amused acting'." All over the world, stage actors voiced similar predictions. Even Bela Lugosi, then in Los Angeles and still two years from filming his classic *Dracula*, was making them.

Deane pluggd away with *Frankenstein*, even bringing it to The Little Theatre in London in 1930. It folded after two months, and only lasted that long because of Deane himself. *The Twines* thought his Monster "a symbol of humanity itself adrift in an unceasing void," and added "Mr. Hamilton Deane's monster is nearly all of the play that is worth watching, but that is much." He planned another foray into the supernatural, an untitled work about a soul returning from hell, but never produced it. Thrillers and mysteries, however, were taking over his repertory. The light comedies and melodramas, that he personally preferred, gave way to the mysterious and the grotesque. In time his laments sounded much like Lugosi's:

"I always seem to be associated with gruesome plays: *Frankenstein* got on my nerves at first, now it simply bores me. I found *Dracula* the same; it depressed me horribly."

Despite the more sensational makeup of Deane's repertory, his company's regular stops from the 1920s dried up by one by one. *Dracula* did allow him to expand in new cities. He replaced Derby with Nottingham at his new base. After 1932, his troupe abandoned repertory except for summers in Nottingham. Deane toured instead with one production a year - *The Green Pack* over the 1932-1933 season; *The Holmeses of Baker Street* over 1933-1934. His last true repertory season at Nottingham failed terribly. He disbanded his troupe and retired.

Deane and Pat married in November 1938. He was 59; she about 40; both marrying for the first and only time. The couple lived in comfortable retirement. Ever since his years abroad decades before, Deane had invested his savings in America. His holdings had weathered the Great Depression well enough; and they were safe against the European war that many saw as inevitable. Deane loved the theatre and made occasional appearances. One of them was the 1936 *Dracula*.

The Deanes married only two weeks after the surprise release of the *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* movie double bill in London. Horror's resurgence gave Deane and Pat one last appearance in the West End, in a revival of the play *Dracula*. The play would not be Deane's original, but as rewritten by John Balderston. Until 1939, Deane's *Dracula* had played in Britain, and Deane & Balderston's in America. Deane's *Dracula* would pop up in the provinces into the 1940s, usually with Deane; but Deane & Balderston was the version everyone knew through the movies. In either form, Van Helsing has lengthy speeches, and reciting them night after night in a long engagement might have been a bit beyond Deane's energies by 1939. That part went to a younger, forceful scion, Ivan Sampson. Deane at last played Count Dracula himself. His vampire was hardly understated. Only one photograph of Deane in character is known to survive. He himself later gave a vivid description to Harry Ludlans:

"...special hair gummed to his high forehead; eyes treated with blue, violet and white greasepaint; daubs of blue and green worked into the face to give the necessary "dead" look; lines drawn on the face and a red vampire's mouth painted over the lips."

Like her husband, Dora Mary Patrick received a far smaller part than her usual in *Dracula*. In one of the play's most memorable scenes, Deane's Dracula hypnotizes and seduces Pat's maid.

Bernard Jukes, the Renfield of the original London and Broadway productions, directed the 1939 revival. He also returned in his signature role. His claim that he had played Renfield over 4,000 times is wildly exaggerated—scarcely that many nights had passed since he first took the part in 1926, and through the 1930s he did plenty of non-*Dracula* theatre. But he was the only man to perform *Dracula* with both Deane and Lugosi. Jukes and Deane had fallen out in 1927 when Jukes stayed with the London production after Deane returned to his touring. Jukes had stayed with *Dracula* on the West End until Horace Liveright summoned him to New York.

The revived *Dracula* opened at the Winter Garden on March 20, 1939 and earned a typical *Dracula* reception from the critics: the tabloids raved and the broadsheets moaned. *The Daily Herald* enjoyed the production's "blackout lurid howls, baying hounds, neck-biting and all." *The Star* thought Deane's Dracula "savage and sinister in the most polished way, and one does not feel easy until he is put out of the way with a stake

through his heart." *The Times* gave him only a passing comment: "Bernard Jukes...was then able to create a degree of horror which *Dracula*, though played by the practised Mr. Hamilton Deane, could hardly sustain." *The Era* thought him "just plain funny." *The Stage* found Deane "impressive, and definitely contrives to spread an atmosphere of evil," but overall thought him and the production "mild-mannered." It suggests rather obliquely that Deane's original script was better. The special effects impressed most viewers as too tame; the action as too slow.

On opening night, late in Act III, the house curtain stuck, and never fell on the final scene. The staked vampire and his conquerors remained motionless on stage, all wondering how to exit with some dignity in full audience view. History does not record whether Deane or a mamequin lie in the coffin.

Ten days later came a historic moment. The final curtain had indeed dropped, and Deane stood onstage alone. Whether he was giving the closing speech or simply acknowledging the applause is unknown. From the wings Bela Lugosi bounded onstage. He had arrived that day to begin filming *Dark Eyes of London*. Deane, forewarned of the visit, offered his hand. Bela embraced him instead, and planted a stage kiss on each cheek, as the house roared its approval.

From the Winter Garden, Bela and Deane were whisked to a cocktail reception at the Waldorf Hotel. Angyle Productions arranged the fête to announce Bela's new British film. No photograph of Lugosi and Deane together is known to exist. Whether Dora Patrick and Bernard Jukes joined them is likewise nowhere recorded. The only press notice the meeting of the two *Draculas* attracted ran in the gossip column of *The Daily Film Reporter*, a trade journal for film exhibitors:

"The reception the other evening to Bela Lugosi was one of those pleasant and informal affairs which, although yielding comparatively little in the way of news, made a very nice break. Having met the "horror merchant" on a previous visit to these shores some few years back, I was not surprised to find Lugosi a mild and charming individual, who in real life looks as much unlike his screen counterpart as one could imagine. In fact, he's a happy family man, and a proud father; got quite a kick out of showing photographs of his young son to assembled

Press boys...a particularly interesting visitor was Hamilton Deane, who is now playing *Dracula* on the stage. He and Lugosi spent quite a while comparing notes."

What they discussed is unknown. They probably talked about the *Dracula* business, but perhaps the new father and the new husband spoke of domestic bliss. Perhaps they reminisced on their homelands, Hungary and Ireland, part of their distance past. When Bela rejoined the party, he told reporters of the beauties of dark mountains surrounding Hungary.

*Dracula's* West End revival lasted 49 performances, and closed at The Lyceum, Henry Irving's old haunt, in May. The West End would not host *Dracula* again for almost 40 years, and Bernard Jukes would never play Renfield again. Hamilton Deane still had a few *Draculas* left in him. ■

**Vampire Over London - Bela Lugosi in Britain tells the full story of Lugosi's last Dracula, the story of both the inner workings of the 1931 tour and its reception by the British public. The book also tells the behind-the-scenes stories of Lugosi's three British films: Mystery of the Mary Celeste, Dark Eyes Of London, and Mother Riley Meets The Vampire.**

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**Lugosi's Dr. Orloff and another drowned patient in *Dark Eyes of London***



The images on this page launch well beyond the realm of "op art" of the 1960's, or the later development of "pop art" of the people. Here and now we begin a new column devoted to artists who have been influenced by the world of fantasy, horror and science-fiction films, and have gone on to work in various media as a result of this association.

Krys Sapp is a young man who has worked as a sculptor, painter and multimedia artist of popular acclaim in the Los Angeles area, and beyond. Like many creative people in ANY field, his earliest exposure to anything in pop culture related to the horror films.

"One of the first films I saw was

# Krys Sapp: cult artist

by  
Gino Colbert

*Creature From the Black Lagoon*, and it's still one of my all time favorites," Krys tells us. He went on to see many of the classic films on television, and caught up with lots of contemporary films in the theaters. "I had the best of both worlds, the old and the new, and enjoyed taking it all in. It helped that my parents liked these films, and collected memorabilia on the classic horrors."

He feels the films were an absolute inspiration on his earliest artistic works, though some of paintings show a kinship to Salvadore Dali.

In a short but busy career, Krys has done album covers for bands, comic art, and even had art exhibitions of his own creations. In one situation, a curator booked a showing of his art pieces sight-unseen, but upon viewing them all together, felt some of them were too extreme. But Krys stuck to his guns and said, either show them all, or none at all. The promoters kept everything in the exhibition, and the result was a success.

At an early age he became aware that movie posters were more than just tools to sell a film. The poster itself could have a theme, a unity, a color pattern, which made them genuine pieces of art. The art of the people, for the people. That awareness and

appreciation has constantly made itself felt in the thoughtful paintings and three dimensional renderings of this extraordinary talent. When he creates a design, it's something which needs no interpretation or explanation. It stands on it's own merits, like the best art always does. "Only bad art or music has a meaning that needs translation," Krys told us. "Classical music never has a meaning."

People wishing to contact Krys are welcomed to write him for more information about new works and upcoming art showings in the Southern California area. He can be reached in care of: Cult Movies, PO Box 1047, Hollywood, CA 90078. —



CULT MOVIES

Last year I had two near brushes with death, with Prince Sirki, the ruler of Death's Domain. (Fredric March in *Death Takes a Holiday*.) Braving turbulence, I flew on bat's wings to Kansas City, MO, where, over Beaster Weekend I was Ghost of Honor at the 13th (!) World Horror Convention. By any chance were you one of the 400 there from around the USA or 5 from overseas? I gave an hour long Acktemporeous speech about Karloff, Lugosi, Bram Stoker, Mary Shelley, John Carradine and other horror personalities and called one young lady up from the audience to play Gloria Stuart opposite me as Claude Rains in an exciting sequence from *The Invisible Man*. The next day I gave an entirely different speech to Standing Room Only and called a doctor up from the audience to play Dr. Waldman from *Frankenstein* while I portrayed a scene where Colin Clive took bodies from the graves, the gallows, anywhere... I concluded by reciting my Lon Chaney story - and followed it up with a movie version!

I recently did my 106th cameo wearing Bela's cape as Dr.acula, the Host of *The Boneyard Trilogy*. One segment is written by George Clayton Johnson of *Twilight Zone* fame, another by Brad Linaweaver (The Lon Chaney Factory) and another features a vampire named Brinke Stevens...played by Brinke Stevens!

I recently gave 3 dinner & entertainment parties at Spazio's ornate Supper Club in Sherman Oaks, CA. Among the fanta-folks participating were Ib J. Melchor, who cameoed me in his film *The Time Travelers*, client Chas. Nuetzel, son of the *Famous Monsters* artist Albert Nuetzel, Bjo Trimble (The Girl Who Saved Star Trek), James Karen (co-cameoing with me in *The Fatal Kiss*), fans the Marchant Bros. and one's fiancee,

## The Ackermonger's Die-ry by Forry Ackerman

Mary Ann Singer, Joe & Ingrid Herzer. A very special guest was Walt Lee (A Reference Guide to Fantastic Films) and daughter. Also, *Cult Movies Magazine* creator Michael Copner, Coco Kiyonaga. *Filmmaker* Don Glat (*Dinosaur Valley Girls* with a cameo by me), Ron & Margaret Borst (Graven Images), Joe Moe (2 fantasies scheduled for forthcoming Ackermanthologies), Sean Fernald, Douglas Aikim (Metropolis Fan #2 after me, who's seen it 102 times), Jackie & Jack Applebaum, Murvyn Douglas, the Dreberns and more.

Twenty-three years ago at the request of his widow Szoka, I gave the eulogy at the funeral of George Pal. Twenty-three years later I went to Holy Cross Cemetery and paid my respects on camera and reminisced about *The 7 Faces of Dr. Lao*, *Time Machine*, *The Power*, (where both George and I had cameos but wound up on the cuttingroom floor together), and other Pal productions for an Ackermanuary under way by Paul Davids, including interviews with Ray Bradbury and John Landis.

For a documentary on the pioneering stop-motion animator I was interviewed on vidcam for 80 minutes for *The Lost Worlds of Willis O'Brien*.

I had a memorable Memorial Day as I was interviewed for an hour for Frank in Hollywood, a TV show for Belgium.

August 7th, local fans saw me escort Ann Robinson, the female star of *War of the Worlds*, to the American Cinematheque Theater in the Egyptian in Horrorwood for the 50th Anniversary Celebration of *War of the Worlds*.

Dear Die-ry: Leave a lot of blank pages for my next report in *Cult Movies Magazine*.---

## ON LOCATION by Coco Kiyonaga

The Hammer Museum at UCLA will honor Billy Wilder by naming a new theater after him. His widow, Audrey recently made a \$5 million donation in his honor. Construction will begin in 2004 and one of its uses will be for screenings by the UCLA Film and Television Archive. Wilder died last year at 95. *Sunset Blvd.*, *Some Like It Hot*, *The Apartment* and *The Seven Year Itch* were among his films. Wilder won three Oscars for the 1960 film, *The Apartment*, one each for co-writer, director and producer and two others for co-writing and directing. *The Lost Weekend*. *Cult Movies Magazine* salutes you Billy Wilder! You are missed.

The Egyptian Theatre is playing host to a fabulous 3-D Film Festival beginning September 12. (Call 661-538-9259 for further information). I just came from a press screening of the feature *It Came From Outer Space*. I have always been fascinated by 3-D. and enjoyed this film very much. Based on a story by Ray Bradbury, it is really amazing at the 3 dimensional effects. It is a little odd to see things such as falling rocks coming down and right towards your face. And the illusion of seeing the car driving out from the screen makes you feel like you are in the movie.

The Casper the Friendly Ghost cartoon of *Boo Moon* was also previewed and the 3-D feeling of being in space as Casper flies through the night

up to the moon is pretty spectacular. The planets that he passes and the stars shine out as if you are really there flying through the air!



Of course there are a few difficulties such as keeping the camera in perfect synchronization in order to get the special effect. The films are old and so there is some warble in the sound and a few spots where the film runs rough, but really those things just really don't matter once you settle down and get used to wearing those funny little special glasses that you must use in order to see the effect. If you don't wear them, the picture appears to be distorted and you see a double image on the screen.

But if you like 3-D film then this is the one festival you must go to. I don't think that you will be disappointed!

Joe Bob Briggs has written a new book called *Profoundly Disturbing*. Be sure and check out the Book Review section and read the review of Joe Bob's new book. Also, if you want to meet him in person and see movies with him; he will be hosting the fantastical *Profoundly Disturbing Film Festival* at the St. Anthony Main Theater in Minneapolis, Minnesota on Friday October 31. Call 612-331-4724 for more information. I wish I could be there!

One note of acknowledgment goes to Rob Hauschild of *Vex Magazine*. Vex ran the original version of the *Wawrzyniak* article of the *Bond Girls* which Rob graciously allowed usage of for issue 38.

Thank you Rob. Please check out his website at [www.vexmag.com](http://www.vexmag.com) for a verxtuous look at life! Have any of you seen *White Rider*? Michael Copner and I had the pleasure of seeing it screened at the remodeled Clatskanie Dome. What a great feeling it was to sit in that historic theater and see this touching movie. The movie is such a simple and charming story of a culture that is on the endangered list and the struggles of the elder to come to terms with the changing world.

With love from Tinseltown, Coco

# Shedding skin

Traci Lords bares her soul in a candid, moving memoir, 'Underneath It All'



by  
Terry Pace

No longer a prisoner of her controversial past, Traci Elizabeth Lords has taken total control of her dramatic, death-defying life.

The former teenage runaway and infamous underage porn star - now firmly established as both an award-winning screen actress and platinum-selling recording artist - has been a pop-culture icon for more than half her 35 years.

In July, America's mythic Little Girl Lost broke a long tradition of silence with the publication of her long-awaited autobiography, *Traci Lords - Underneath It All*. Gripping, chilling and ultimately uplifting, Lords' candid, intimate, no-holds-barred memoir recalls a childhood marked by emotional and sexual abuse, poverty, drugs, loneliness and parental neglect.

"My quest for balance still continues after all these years, but I look at life differently now," Lords writes in the book's conciliatory closing chapter. "I don't believe things are black and white anymore. I see the gray area. I carry with me the scars of my battles, but my heart has healed a great deal."

Born Nora Kuzma in the "dirty little steel town" of Steubenville, Ohio, the future Traci Lords born the second of four sisters who grew

up in a broken home watching their alcoholic father beat their long-suffering mother. Eventually her parents split up, and Nora and her sisters moved west with their mother to Los Angeles.

"I barely caught a glimpse of Hollywood Boulevard as we pulled onto the 101 Freeway, but I still remember the way the stars lay along the sidewalk," she writes. "I lost my breath for a moment, in awe of the palm-lined street. We drove off just as I had truly arrived. I knew then I'd be back. I just didn't know why."

Manipulated and molested by her mother's new boyfriend, she used a borrowed birth certificate to obtain a fake ID. With her feminine figure already fully developed, 15-year-old Nora Kuzma - who survived rape by a 16-year-old boyfriend at the age of 10, then experienced the emotional trauma of an abortion five years later - walked into the Department of Motor Vehicles in Torrance, California, and emerged 22-year-old Kristie Elizabeth Nussman.

"It was no different to me than when my sister and I switched identities in school, except this time I was leaving Nora Kuzma for good," Lords recalls.

"She was the one who had been raped, used,

and abused -- and I didn't want to be her anymore. And as for the consequences of my actions, why would I ever think of them then? I was an angry 15-year-old acting blindly from a place of rage and desperation, so I never once contemplated the price I would ultimately pay for giving false information to the DMV."

From there, the rebellious, reinvented teenager worked odd jobs and stumbled into a series of nude-modeling jobs before receiving national exposure in *Penthouse* magazine. She bared her curvaceous 16-year-old body as the nude centerfold in the now-fabled September 1984 issue of *Penthouse* - the same issue that helped topple Vanessa Williams from her Miss America throne. The magazine also introduced her new identity.

"I was told I needed a 'sexy' stage name, so I chose Traci, one of the 'popular' names I'd longed for growing up," she explains. "During a rerun of the series *Hawaii Five-0* later that evening, I took actor Jack Lord's surname. In my mind, his Steve McGarrett was the perfect fantasy father. I added an 'L' to Lord because there were three of us: Nora (my birth name), Kristie (my fake ID name) and now Traci (the girl everybody wanted). ... For five weeks I led a double life. I was high school sophomore Nora Kuzma by day and nude centerfold Traci Lords by night."

A classmate eventually exposed her dual identity during an embarrassing, unexpected encounter in the school cafeteria. She left Redondo High School that same instant and never returned. Running away from home, she succumbed more and more frequently to numbing doses of alcohol and cocaine as assignments posing for sleazy skin magazines eventually evolved into work in pornographic films. Today, Lords insists that these movies showed her "acting out" rather than acting.

"That's what porn did for me," she recalls. "It allowed me to release all the fury I'd felt my entire life. And that's what got me off. Freedom, peace, revenge, sex, power. I'd finally found a place to put my energies -- I was vengeful, even savage, in sex scenes, fully unleashing my wrath. At the ripe old age of sweet 16, I was nothing short of a sexual terrorist."

Over a period of less than three years, teen runaway Traci Lords performed in some 20 sexually explicit films -- movies that would earn far greater national notoriety once it was revealed that their cocaine-fueled blonde bombshell was underage. In time, footage shot for those films was repackaged into an even greater number of triple-X titles, broadening the base of the "Traci Lords" legend -- and the scope of its impending scandal.

"Sex on camera fed a very specific hunger in me," she contends today. "It allowed me to release my rage, and in the moment took away the pain that hounded me. It was the best drug of all."

Soon after her 18th birthday, a long-running FBI sting operation ended the self-destructive (and times suicidal) porn-and-drugs phase of Traci Lords' life and career. Agents burst into her Los Angeles apartment and carried her to the federal building downtown, interrogating her and explaining that the "Traci Lords case" was three years old and the centerpiece of a federal investigation into child pornography.

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Only one of her sexually explicit features, the French porn film *Traci, I Love You*, was made after she reached the minimum legal age on May 7, 1986. Yet the FBI had been gathering evidence and following her case throughout her pornographic career. Believing that she had turned herself in, the porn industry turned against her. The authorities, she concluded, were merely there to exploit her for the benefit of their own political agenda. It was difficult, she reasoned, to differentiate the "good guys" from the "bad guys."

"Struggling to regain my sanity, I was hit from every angle," she recalls. "With the federal government, the still-circulating death threats from the porn industry, the IRS, and the local media who hid out in my bushes and stalked me daily, I was going down fast."

Bouncing back from a horrific life of hard drugs, alcohol abuse and sexual degradation, Lords slowly but surely reclaimed her dignity, self-respect and professional integrity through heavy doses of therapy, discipline and determination. The slow, gradual evolution of that progress is detailed in *Underneath It All*.

"The hardest person for me to forgive has been me," she concludes in her book. "I thought for such a long time that I was just a bad girl, and what happened to me was simply my own fault. Working those issues out in front of the camera, first in porn, then later in mainstream movies in Hollywood, was hell."

Besieged by legal battles and sensational tabloid headlines, Lords used her self-described "survival instinct" to resume her life and pursue her dreams. At the age of 19, she was accepted into acting school at the prestigious Strasberg Institute. After playing a call girl on the television series *Wipeout*, she won the starring role (and filmed her last nude footage to date) in Roger Corman's 1988 remake of his 1957 cult classic, *Not of This Earth*, directed by Jim Wynorski. Lords played what she calls "sarcastic, quick-witted sexy nurse" Nadine Storey, the same role played by Beverly Garland in Corman's original science-fiction thriller. Even though it was little more

than a sensational role in a B-budget exploitation film, the *Hollywood Reporter* cast a conclusive vote on Traci Lords' transition into mainstream movies: "The answer is yes. She can act."

Since then, Lords has earned critical raves in big-screen projects ranging from John Waters' quirky 1990 period comedy *Cry-Baby* (in which she played a sassy, leather-clad '50s rebel

Lords' film career also includes roles in *Fast Food* (1989), *Shock 'Em Dead* (1990), *Raw Nerve* (1991) with Glenn Ford, *Laser Moon* (1992), the television mini-series adaptation of Stephen King's *The Tommyknockers* (1993), *Waters' Serial Mom* (1994), *Knockin' Girls* (1994), *Sliver* (1995), *Blood Money* (1996), *Boogie Boy* (1997), *Me and Will* (1998), *Certain Guys* (1999) and *Epicenter* (2000).

As *Underneath It All* vigorously affirms, music has always played an essential role in the life of Traci Lords. Her recording debut, a techno album called *1,000 Fires*, soared to the top of the dance charts in 1995 and spawned the dance-club hits *Control* and *Fallen Angel*. Lords contributed a standout track to the multimillion-selling soundtrack for the video-game movie *Mortal Kombat* (1995), and performed her original music on-screen in the Denzel Washington-Russell Crowe virtual-reality thriller *Virtually* that same year.

Three years ago, Lords won the best-actress award from the U.S. Comedy Arts Festival in Aspen, Colorado, for her role in a critically acclaimed but little-seen independent film called *Chung Change*. In addition to publishing her autobiography, Lords has recorded a new single and music video (*Nobody Walks in L.A.*) and is developing an original screenplay for a short film she hopes to direct in the near future.

"It's based on the chapter in my book called 'Curse of the C Cops,'" she revealed. "The star of it is this 10-year-old girl, and it definitely deals with rape. I took a piece of that chapter and elaborated on it and tried to make it very simple and very film-friendly. It deals with the psyche of this child."

In a recent telephone interview from her home in Los Angeles - where she lives with her husband, Jeffrey Lee, and their two cats, Mallicai and Pea - Traci Elizabeth Lords talked about the lingering ghosts of her past, life in the present and prospects for the future.

**C M :** What inspired you to tell your story, in your own words, at this point in your life?

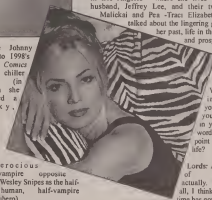
Lords: A couple of reasons, actually. First of all, I think enough time has gone by for

me to be able to process everything. I don't think people realize how long it's been. I was 15 then, and I'm 35 now. So it has been 20 years this year.

Also, I got tired of reading things about myself that were either complete exaggerations or just downright untrue -- and I wanted to set the record straight. There have been so many pieces put together for television and elsewhere -- those True Hollywood Stories or whatever -- that have been just so bogus. So for me, it was something



opposite Johnny Depp) to 1998's *Marvel Comics* movie chiller *Blade* (in which she played a sexy,



ferocious vampire opposite Wesley Snipes as the half-human, half-vampire antihero).

She has also contributed versatile, memorable portrayals to such popular, wide-ranging television series as *Married With Children*, *Tales from the Crypt*, *Roseanne*, *Melrose Place*, *Hercules*, *Profiler* (unforgettably cast as a serial killer) and the Sci-Fi Channel favorite *First Wave*, in which she mastered martial-arts skills to play the principal role of Jordan Radcliffe, an aristocratic-heiress-turned-alien-fighting-anarchist.

I thought I should do now - to tell my side of the story. Thus the process began.

**CM:** You're no stranger to the craft of writing, but *Undeath II* is your first full-length work. How did you proceed?

**Lords:** The first step was finding a publisher and an editor that would allow me to write it myself - and let me tell you, that was no small task.

I've written short stories and songs before, but I've never written a manuscript in this kind of depth. So, honestly, nobody had any real reason to think that I could do it - but Harper Collins and my editor, Josh Behar, really gave me a chance to. They've been fantastic, and I've been really particular about every little detail, from working with the art department on how I saw the graphics to picking out the photographs.

**CM:** Were you confident from the start that you could write this book all on your own?

**Lords:** In the very, very beginning stages, in like November of 2000, I started looking for a co-writer or ghost writer just as soon as I decided this was something I wanted to do. From what I was told, that was the main thing an actor or actress has to do - get a co-writer and start working with that person.

It became clear very early on that that was not going to work for me. It was a very frustrating process, trying to find the right person to write with. I wasn't getting anywhere. So I sat down and wrote my editor this ranting e-mail saying, "I'm very passionate about this, and this is what it should be like."

To make a long story short, that led to the first six paragraphs of my book and the whole Ohio section and how I saw the town. Those memories are just so vivid to me. So instead of working with a co-writer, I ended up writing the entire book on my Mac, the way I wanted it written.

**CM:** How would you compare this creative experience to the writing you've done in the past?

**Lords:** It was a daunting task at first. With a short story, it's 20 or 30 pages and you're finished. You can see light at the end of the tunnel. With this book, there were times when I would get so frustrated and think, "I just can't do this." But somehow it just all slowly poured out.

I started writing it in July of last year, and I turned in my first draft two months later. Everyone says that was fast, but it seemed like it took forever. That first draft was 500 pages, and writing it was like throwing up. It was all over the place.

But it was a skeleton, and it went to my editor, Josh. Then I started the rewrites, clarifying and filling things in. I would e-mail chapters to my manager, Juliet Green, and ask her, "Does this make sense?" From that point on, it was all writing and rewriting. Four months later, another rewrite was born.

Most of last year, I worked on this book. I did one film (the Sci-Fi Channel thriller *Deathload*), and I wrote. Sometimes I'd start at

5 in the morning and write until 3 in the afternoon. That was really all I did. That's probably how that first draft happened so quickly, because I was pretty much a maniac once I got started.

**CM:** One of the people who encouraged you along the way was cult-movie director John Waters, who cast you in two of his films, *Cry-Baby* and *Serious Moon*.

**Lords:** I really trust John's judgment, and he was supportive very early on. I told him, "John, I'm thinking about writing this book myself." His advice to me was, "You should absolutely write it yourself. No one knows your life better than you do." He said, "Don't be intimidated by the length of it. Just think of it as a series of short stories all connecting." And he was right.



**CM:** In recalling so many traumatic experiences, did you find yourself reliving all of that pain, fear and devastation?

**Lords:** At first I was really nervous. For one thing, I kept asking myself, "Can I pull this off?" But there was another part of me that was wondering, "How is this going to feel?" It was like an emotional roller coaster, really, because some of those things are really hard for me to even think about, even today.

I guess I have to thank my sense of memory as an actor for guiding me through that. I didn't have any journals or notes, but I listened to songs from the '80s that brought back memories so vividly. That's why many of the chapter headings are song titles, like *Heil is for Children*, *Angel is the Centerfold* or *Running on Empty*. Music really triggered those memories.

**CM:** You were abused and exploited by a number of outside forces, but you're also very candid in the book regarding the consequences of your own decisions.

**Lords:** All of those events, for better or worse, really shaped my life and made me the person I am today. Some of those experiences were so traumatizing, and I thought it was important to tell them from the standpoint of, "This is how it was. This is how I felt. This is what I thought. This is where my head was when I was 10, and this is what happened to me."

I didn't want to go in and judge it and tell people what to think about it. I didn't want to say, "Look at what these bad people did to me." I wanted to say, "These are the choices I made, and this is what happened." This was the reality I felt when I was that girl.

**CM:** Your book is dedicated to "the children of the night." You're actively involved with a nonprofit organization called Children of the Night that helps young girls who have been victimized by the sex industry.

**Lords:** Dr. Lois Lee started Children of the Night, and they do wonderful work. Writing this book, I had an opportunity to examine this blueprint of where I came from. Looking back at my life, I realize that this could have been any girl. There are so many Traci Lords out there. They all have a version of my story - they really do.

When you come from a background of sexual abuse, acting out sexually is so common it's ridiculous. So there isn't anything odd about why I did what I did as far as the psyche goes. It's pretty predictable.

I think that what was so shocking about me in particular was that I became such a phenomenon in the porn world, which was completely accidental. I never tried to become a porn star. It was just me trying to vent all of this stuff in some sort of insane power trip. It all got mixed up into one big bag, which happened to be porn. I was elevated to that place, and it finally brought me down.

It was never some Machiavellian plot, as some people have suggested. I wasn't some little genius child who thought, "I'm going to trick them all and become a porn star." There was manipulation involved, but I was a young girl who was dealing with all of this emotional damage - and that was where I landed.

**CM:** Near the end of the book, you point out that instead of emerging a survivor, you might have become another statistic.

**Lords:** I really believe that I must have nine lives. There were so many times, in so many places, when I stood on that ledge - and I really do get the gravity of that. It's taken me the last 17 or 18 years to get to the place where I really could process that and see the bottom line.

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I survived those experiences, and then I survived the shame and embarrassment. I even bought into that for a while. When I reached my late 20s, I looked at it and started thinking, "Yeah, OK, I get the mistakes, but do I deserve such judgment and persecution?" You would have thought that I had murdered people.

I started to get a strong sense of the double standard for women and men, especially this whole horrible title "whore" and what it means in society the way that word is thrown around. That's one reason why I started working with *Children of the Night*. Each of these girls has been abused in one way or another, and they're going through that struggle right now. "Am I ever going to get a job or get married and have kids? What are people going to think about me? Will I ever have to admit that I was a prostitute?" Advertising tells you that a porn star's life is glamorous, but that's a crock of crap. Pornography is prostitution. With these girls, that's such a shameful thing. Once they're out of it, how do they go about their lives? They've all read my book, and they look at me and say, "Wow, you're OK now. Maybe it's going to be OK for us, too."

**CM:** What do you hope general audiences will discover through reading your life story?

**Lords:** Maybe it's just me, but porn seems to have become so mainstream all of a sudden. I have no connections to that world anymore. But just as a public person, I find it really horrifying that when I drive down Sunset Boulevard, I see all of these billboards on a broad daylight advertising gentlemen's clubs. I go to the liquor store to buy wine, and I see adult magazines and say, "Whoa." I go to my computer and turn it on, and there's all of this unsolicited junk mail that's hardcore porn. It's all over television and the talk-radio shows.

else. I'm not trying to condemn adults who enjoy watching porn films for whatever reason, but I am against child pornography.

When I hear porn stars say, "Hey, man, porn is liberating for women, and it's the best thing that

But I'm also thinking, "There are 15- or 16-year-old girls out there trying to figure out who they are. They're going to hear that and think maybe that's what they want to grow up to be."

So I want to say, "Hey, check out the other side of the picture before you decide you want to grow up and be a porn star." Maybe, on that level, my book will draw a more complete picture of that industry.

**CM:** As an actress, you went from formal study to some very practical experience, both in film and on television. How would you describe your evolution as an actress?

**Lords:** When I came out of the Strasberg Institute, I thought I had this wonderful formula. I was just barely 19, and I really needed some rules in my life. Through formal study, I was being given rules on what to do and how to succeed, and that was very important to me. So I really, really grabbed on to the whole thing.

When I came out of that training, I did a science-fiction B-movie for Roger Corman called *Not of This Earth*. Working with Corman and Jim Wynorski and being chased by my Ray-Ban-wearing alien co-star, Arthur Roberts, I realized very quickly, "Hey, this formula doesn't necessarily work." I had to throw away a lot of my formal training.

The Strasberg Institute did give me discipline as an actor that I have kept with me over the years. Training gave me a certain sense of confidence and taught me how to work well and put it all together in my brain. In those early days, it was really just sink or swim, and the training I had gave me a life raft. I look back on that first episode of *Wiseguy* that I ever did, and I just, cringe and say, "Oh, my God. I was terrible! I was awful!" I really wanted to do well, but I was so scared. I didn't even know what a mark was. I had no idea what I was doing, but somehow it was OK. It all worked out.

**CM:** Three years ago, you appeared in an independent film called *Chung Change*. You received some of the best critical notices of your career, including a Best Actress Award from the U.S. Comedy Film Festival, and yet it remains unreleased.

**Lords:** Exactly. I won Best Actress for a performance no one has ever seen. It's been very, very frustrating, and I know it's been frustrating for Stephen Burrows, who wrote it and directed it and did a beautiful job with the film. It's played all over the festival circuit. It's gotten amazing reviews, and everybody loves it. It's been hailed and hailed and hailed, but nothing's happened. It's never been released to theaters. The latest news is that it will be released on DVD in January. I don't



PM HOME VIDEO presents TRACI LORDS, starring in "INTENT TO KILL"

I don't want to mean self-righteous, and I certainly don't mean to imply that I'm a saint or a nun or that I don't like sex as much as anybody

ever happened to me," I think. "Oh, my God." First of all, I'm flabbergasted that they're saying it, because it certainly did not make me happy.

know what else to say about it except that it's one of those things that just really, really sucks. We'll just have to wait and see.

**CM:** You mention in the book that in difficult times, make-believe and fantasy served as your refuge and salvation. Has that childhood coping device aided you in your acting career?

**Lords:** From the time when I was a little girl, I always had a vivid imagination. That got me into

recording artist, but your one and only album was released almost 10 years ago. With a new book out and an ongoing screen career, where does music fit into your life at this point?

**Lords:** It's right there on the tip. I just got released from my old record contract, and I've now signed a new contract that's leading to some exciting things. We've got a new song and a new video that I think is really, really great. I'm finding so much joy in writing my music at the

moment, and I find that my songwriting has changed a lot with this book. I'm writing about things that are really important to me right now, and the lyrics tend to be more raw. So music is still a glimmer in my eye -- it's definitely happening.

When I recorded *1,000 Fires*, I learned from my mistakes. For instance, I was really frustrated with the vocals. A lot of producers had a chance to really showcase their stuff, and they did that,

and they did that well. Ultimately, I was pretty happy, but I never really felt that my vocals were a priority on that record. You always hear singers say their vocals should have been handled differently, but it's true: They should have been, because it was my record. But I was still in my mid-20s and trying to figure it all out. I was writing about the things I wanted to write about, but there were aspects of the process that I didn't understand. It was like I was wearing the costume, but I really hadn't grown into yet. I was a new artist, and I let myself be pushed around a little bit. This time, that's not going to happen.

**CM:** You've developed a diverse and dedicated fan base over the years. Who are today's Traci Lords fans, and how does it feel when you meet them one-on-one at film festivals, conventions or book-signings?

**Lords:** It's really, really wild. When *1,000 Fires* came out, I realized how vast my fan base really was. There would be 15- or 16-year-old kids there who were totally obsessed with techno music. There were young women there who held Melrose Place parties every week. There were music fans, sci-fi and horror fans, and then there were the porn fans who had been really into that. They came from all walks of life. Some of them were just curious. "Isn't she the girl that used to?" At times, it bothered me -- I was in that phase where I was trying to figure it all out.

Where I'm at now is that I've come to the conclusion that I don't really have the right to tell people what to think of me. Some people are misinformed, and you can try to correct them when they're wrong. But when you're putting your art or your vision or your product out to the public, you have no control over what people think. That's a simple concept that's difficult to accept, but I've done pretty well with that. I can still be a bit sensitive with people about the porn days. Every once in a while, somebody will

say something insulting or just plain stupid. As much as I've come to terms with a lot of that, it can still be very annoying.

After all this time, I still don't know what to say to the guy who comes up to me and says, "I've got all your old movies." Whether you do or you don't, you might just want to keep it to yourself. Maybe it pushes my buttons, or maybe it's not so cool that you're collecting child pornography. Some of them don't even get that that's what it is. But for the most part, my fans are amazingly respectful and very, very supportive. I have a message board on my Web site, and fans get on there and talk about everything I'm doing. They collect all of my magazines and trading cards and calendars and posters, and they're the first ones there in the autograph lines. I'm just grateful to them for caring.

**CM:** After all the hardships and heartbreak and trials and tribulations you've experienced, *Underneath It All* concludes on a grace note with your recent marriage and what you call "the beginning of my happy ending." What was your husband's reaction to the book?

**Lords:** We were married a year ago in February, but I've known him for seven years. He's a cool guy, and one of the most interesting experiences writing this book has been watching him read it. Jeff knows a lot about me, but there were things in the book that even he didn't know. He went back and forth between wanting to hunt people down and strangle them to laughing out loud at things that are both really sad and really ridiculous.

We don't have any secrets from each other, so there's no judgment that way in our relationship. He's the first man in my life who has not been threatened by my past and who I am. It's really pretty amazing.



PHOTO CREDITS Courtesy: asac as listed: Pg. 66, 67, 69. Harper Entertainment Pg. 67 (zebra skin) www.TraciLords.com Pg. 67 FIRST WAVE w/ knife SCI-FI CHANNEL Pg. 68 BLADE NEW LINE CINEMA



trouble when I was young. From early on, English was one of my favorite classes, and I would write these outrageous stories that would just come to me. When we had to do book reports on certain books, I would make up my own. That was what I did. I wasn't trying to be bad, but I made up stories constantly. I just considered it entertainment and a form of escape.

I was never taught the difference in exaggerating things and making things up. I wasn't encouraged to do it in the right way. I think that led to some of the later mistakes I made, like lying about my age. The bottom line is that I was always pretending to be something else because my own reality was

so harsh. It was always sort of a struggle to maintain some sturdy ground.

**CM:** You explain in the book that your working philosophy has always been to make each new project better than the last. What are you looking for at this point, both in the roles you play and other projects you select?

**Lords:** Right now, I would say my priority is to do my own projects and make my own choices. I really see myself going behind the camera as a filmmaker. I want better pieces and more control over their outcome.

As an actor, you sign on for a project thinking it will be one thing, but you don't always understand the complete vision of the person behind it. In the end, it's very often not what you hoped it would be. I don't know if it is vastly different to wear the director's cap, but I do think that it would make a difference.

I have not gotten to play my dream role yet. I have never played a role that is as rich and multi-layered as I am. I have a lot of layers, and I know that role is out there. I can't help but thinking, "Maybe I have to write my own dream part."

**CM:** You've achieved remarkable success as a 70

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# Lee Kinsolving: A Star Who Nearly Was

## By Gary Bennett

Star quality, like sex appeal, is something you either possess or don't. It's its own entity – beyond talent and, yes, good looks. Case in point: Paul Newman, an icon in the truest sense of the word, a star whose intense screen presence renders his looks and ability – and there's plenty of both – arbitrary. Newman need only blink, shrug, hell, arrive – and his audience – male and female – is transfixed. He, like James Dean, Montgomery Clift and Marlon Brando shook up the stultifying '50s by marrying the talent of, say, Paul Muni with the virility of Errol Flynn, redefining the alchemy of the leading man. Yet possessing the raw talent and charisma that permeated '50s, and even '60s cinema hardly guaranteed success. For every Dean or Brandon DeWilde who attained stardom, a few select others fell by the wayside.

One such actor was the gifted and poetic Lee Kinsolving. Blessed with a smooth, caramel voice, Kinsolving was tall and rakishly handsome, with arresting, wide-set eyes. Like Clift, he presented a confident, genteel exterior while a haunting fragility lay beneath. He was ironic, brooding and always boyish, a trait which often belied his potent sexuality. Moreover, the economy of Kinsolving's acting was rare for his youth. "A quality actor", says Western star Ben Cooper. "He was so subtle, you never knew he was acting." So, the question remains: Why wasn't Kinsolving a star?

The son of an Episcopal minister and the eldest of four, Kinsolving was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1938 and raised in New York. A mischievous kid, he harbored nary a dream to act. It wasn't, in fact, until after his first year of college that Kinsolving began, against his father's wishes, to audition for roles in New York theatre. After a brief stint on Broadway – the short-lived *Winesburg, Ohio* – he was signed by super-agent Dick Clayton, who had masterminded James Dean's stardom.

Within months, Kinsolving was appearing in various East Coast television shows, including *Playhouse 90*. From the beginning, he was a thoroughly professional actor.

In the spring of 1959, Kinsolving starred in The Hallmark Hall Of Fame Production of Eugene O'Neill's *Ah, Wilderness!*, in which he was supported by such stalwarts as Helen Hayes, Lloyd Nolan, Burgess Meredith and Betty Field.

That Kinsolving won, let alone carried off such a role after acting professionally little more than a year is astounding, given the complexities of the material, not to mention the perils of live television. The end result (a brittle kinescope survives and is available for viewing at The Museum Of Television And Radio) is a performance rich in both flavor and nuance – a stunning hybrid of boyish wonder and aching sexuality.



Deeply impressed, Hayes became an early mentor. Between roles in such TV Westerns as *Have Gun – Will Travel* and *Black Saddle*, Kinsolving studied under Mary Welch of the famed Actors Studio. Immersing himself in The Method technique, Kinsolving explored his feelings of defiance and alienation with regards to his father. In an interview sometime later, he commented that Welch "was the only person I was (professionally) close to." Her sudden death at age 35 left Kinsolving shattered. Reluctantly, he moved to Hollywood and continued appearing in various television shows.

One early assignment, TV's *The Rifleman*, afforded Kinsolving the opportunity to work with movie and television veteran Dabbs Greer. Greer, 86, still works today (he enjoyed a pivotal role in the 1999 film *The Green Mile*) and has clocked in over 600 TV guest roles and a hundred feature films.

Greer says of Kinsolving: "I've worked with thousands of actors over the years. Some of these folks are memorable, many are not. Lee was memorable. He was still wet behind the ears when we did the show where I played his father."

I was supposed to drop dead in the street. The director wanted tears. Lee—remember, he was just a kid (20)—thought that was hokey. He said he was from the New York stage and didn't believe in tears. The director said 'It's television, I need tears!' So, I whispered, 'Lee, better give him tears.' We did the scene again and Lee gave him tears – real tears. Incredible. Most actors fight to chew the scenery. You know, 'watch me, watch me!' Lee wanted to underplay."

Greer goes on to say that he felt Kinsolving "was one of the most sensitive young actors to come out of New York. The boy was dripping with star quality."

In 1960, Kinsolving landed the coveted role of Sammy Golden in the film adaptation of William Inge's Pulitzer-Prize winning play *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*. Although he had made his screen debut the previous year in the hackneyed war film, *All The Young Men*, this was Kinsolving's most complex role to date. Working with such veterans as Robert Preston, Dorothy McGuire and Angela Lansbury, Kinsolving portrayed a tormented Jewish cadet, struggling to survive in oppressive 1920s Oklahoma. Oscar-winning director Delbert Mann chose Kinsolving after testing several actors, including Troy Donahue. "We had to go with Lee", recalls Mann. "He became Sammy."

In the film (gorgeously photographed in Technicolor by Harry Stradling), Sammy meets awkward teen Reenie Flood (Shirley Knight) after crashing his roommate's car into a tree –

scarcely missing her. Convinced she's responsible, boy-shy Reenie wipes the blood from Sammy's mouth, unaware that his wounds run deeper than a cut lip. Making no mention of his being Jewish — the key element to his quiet misery — Sammy later escorts her to a "restricted" party where he is asked to leave. That Sammy takes his life is no surprise, given the impact of the preceding scenes. What is surprising is the fact that his death follows a quiet hospital scene in which Reenie reassures him of her love and the warm family dinners that await him following his recovery from a self-induced car crash. When he does die (off-screen), the effect is all the more devastating.

Mann's careful direction aside, Kinsolving played these moments with remarkable restraint. In doing so, we see a young man who's been dying for years, little by little, rather than someone gasping their last breaths. Not surprisingly, the film won several Oscar nominations, including Knight and Lansbury for Best Supporting Actress. Kinsolving, however, was ignored, despite being singled out by many



*The Explosive Generation*  
Lee Kinsolving and William Shatner



Shirley Knight and Lee Kinsolving

critics as giving the film's best performance ("Outstanding", said Motion Picture Herald). It didn't help that 1960 was a banner year for film, with such distinguished fare as *The Apartment*, *Spartacus*, *Elmer Gantry* and *Exodus* all competing for top awards. The latter won Sal Mineo an Oscar nomination and both he and Kinsolving ran neck-in-neck for the Golden Globe for Best Supporting Actor. Mineo won. Kinsolving was forced to settle for Best Performance By A Juvenile in The Film Daily Critics poll.

Nonetheless, the prestige of *Stairs* won Kinsolving unanimous respect as a young actor. His youthful good looks, as well as his need to work may have subsequently landed him in such silly TV fare as *Hawaiian Eye* and *The Tab Hunter Show*, but his new-found reputation rendered him far above Hunter or Troy Donahue. Even the fan magazines, always obsequious in their star-of-the-month drivel,

much to be desired. Originally entitled *The Chalk Arena*, Kinsolving, ostensibly on his way up, shared the screen with Patty McCormack and Billy Gray, two actors on their way down. Based on a true account, McCormack suggests to high school teacher William Shatner that she and her fellow students compose anonymous essays

managed on occasion to distinguish him from the other pretty boys. In its September 1960 issue, *Movies Illustrated* noted Kinsolving's passion for Brando and *The Method*, as well as his love for motorcycles and bachelor life. Ultimately, *The Explosive Generation* reveals an intriguing clue as to the hastened demise of Kinsolving's film career: Choosing to star in a B-movie so early could mean professional suicide. Today, when a young actor decides to head an indie, the move is considered sharp and

detailing their problems with sex. Dismissing venereal disease, ignoring homosexuality, and pre-dating AIDS, the film is nothing more than a hodgepodge of angry parents and militant students, all of whom seem trapped in the world of Eisenhower. Released in 1961, the film would have seemed ridiculous in 1966. Scarcely seen in the intervening decades (like *Stars*, it has never found its way to home video), the film has amassed somewhat of a cult following among collectors of pirate video.

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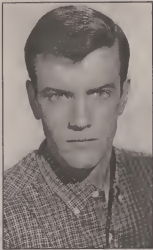


Lee Kinsolving and  
Patty McCormack in  
*The Explosive Generation*

hip. In 1961, however, the decision to shy away from the big studios and their artificial back lots meant trouble. And while Kinsolving supposedly abhorred "dotted lines", it is doubtful he was offered a role of substance by Warner's or any other studio.

This in itself is puzzling. For immediately following *Stairs*, Warner Brothers began production on *Splendor In The Grass* which, like *Stairs*, was penned by William Inge. More puzzling still is the fact that Eli Kazan (whom Kinsolving admired) cast a virtually unknown Warren Beatty in the role of Bud, a simple, randy young fellow whose sole ambition is to love the sexually repressed Deanie, portrayed by Natalie Wood. As appealing as Beatty was, Kinsolving projected far more sensitivity and sexual intrigue – a perfect match for the lovely and equally mysterious Wood. Moreover, Beatty was less accomplished, his then sole credit being TV's *The Affairs Of Dobie Gillis*.

Oddly enough, Kinsolving managed to imprint a certain style in various TV guest roles (two pilots, filmed in 1961, didn't sell). In the spring of 1964 alone, he guested in four immensely popular shows – *The Twilight Zone*, *The Outer Limits*, *Gunslinger* and *Route 66*, lending each



Chuck Connors, Debbas Greer  
and Lee Kinsolving in *The Affairs Of Dobie Gillis*

episode nuanced, highly diverse characterizations.

In Zone's "Black Leather Jackets", he is Scott, one of a trio of alien bikers who arrive in a small town, all set to poison mankind – until he meets the lovely-young-thing next door (Shelly Fabares). Penned by a pre-Waltons Earl Hamner Jr., the script is clichéd and full of holes. Yet Kinsolving – cocky, sexy and shimmering in black leather – cuts a striking figure, his boyish, clean-cut face making him all the more ominous. So unnerving is the chemistry between he and Fabares, that one is left emotionally stung by the hopeless, downbeat ending – this despite dumb dialogue and flat direction. Kinsolving's appearance in *The Outer Limits* is even more intriguing. As Ethan in "The Children Of Spider County", he is a half-alien firmhand who's been set up on a murder charge and facing execution. His father (Kent Smith) arrives and offers salvation. The price? Ethan must relinquish his human traits (emotion) and return to their home planet. Haunting and oddly subdued, Kinsolving is ambivalence personified as he struggles between the love for his girl and loyalty to his father (again, familiar territory for Kinsolving). In *Gunslinger*'s "The Other Half", he plays twins Jess and Jay Bartell – one good, the other evil (or, in Kinsolving's hands, tormented) – and walks away with the show, leaving Matt and Miss Kitty in the proverbial dust. The gifted Alvin Sargent (*Julia*, *Ordinary People*) conceived Kinsolving's turn in *Route 66*, "Follow the White Dove with the Broken Wing", a moving piece concerning a troubled teen who accidentally kills a young cop. At age 25 when "Dove" was filmed in late 1963, Kinsolving managed to vest in 17 year-old Walter a keen balance of childlike spleen and teen-age rebellion. Jumpy and nervous, his stolen gun is empowered by a wiry aim and a thousand hurts. So taut is his demeanor, that one is left literally hanging on every terse word and trembling gesture. When he is finally surrounded outside a barren beach house (a la Frankenstein), his breakdown evokes a sense of relief. Retreating into the child he can no longer outrun, he hugs a lempost and pouts, his exhausted, glassy eyes dropping nary a tear. As always, Kinsolving was brave enough to allow his character the dignity to implode, thus letting the tears flow from within.

Despite his prescience that spring, Kinsolving was completely ignored when Emmy time rolled round. Disgusted and bored, he turned down the lead in another pilot – a Western. While more conventional actors like Robert Horton and, later, Lee Majors, roamed the TV prairies with their chiseled physiques and howdy ma'am sensibilities, Kinsolving called it a day and vanished from the television landscape.

Ironically, the same intrinsic mystery Kinsolving brought to television became more prevalent in cinema as the decade drew to a close. Beginning in 1966 with *Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf?*, movies were unquestionably

breaking ground – and the rules – with an outpouring of releases that, finally, were synonymous with the political, musical and social changes of the era. If Kinsolving lacked the bemused charm of Dustin Hoffman in *The Graduate*, or the weary presence of George Segal in *Woolf*, his casting in both would have shamed neither. Moreover, 1968's *The Fox and*, in particular, 2001: *A Space Odyssey* would have proven even more intriguing in his hands than in those of the talented, but dull, Keir Dullea.

Yet the blame finally rests with Kinsolving. While actors of any era must bide the politics of the industry, Kinsolving, always impatient, grew tired of compromises. By 1965, he had quit altogether. For a few years, he co-owned a hip restaurant-bar, Tond Hall, in Manhattan's Upper-East side. Struggling with the mob, creditors and other invasive riff-raff, he bailed out and sold his share in 1969. Later that same year, he married a young model and moved to Florida. Briefly, he managed two art galleries. But, again, his feet itching to move on, Kinsolving divorced his wife and spent the remainder of his life sailing Tahiti, the Gulf of Mexico and just about anywhere else his schooner took him, often with little more than the shirt on his back.

By the mid-'70s, Kinsolving, his hair a silver gray, was bartending part-time and residing in Palm Beach. As butchered-for-commercials repeats of *The Rifleman* and *The Outer Limits* flickered across the country, Kinsolving's former cronies, Richard Chamberlain and James Franciscus (both of whom cojoyed series glory with *Dr. Kildare* and *Mr. Novak*), conquered the big screen in *The Three Musketeers* and *Beneath the Planet Of The Apes*. One can imagine the sad impact, as blaring trailers for 1974's *Musketeers* blasted off television during breaks



of a Saturday afternoon rerun of *Limits*. Not that it mattered much.

In December of the same year, Kinsolving, who had been waging a war against a mysterious medical ailment which would render him unconscious, died alone in the bathroom of his apartment. He was 36. A heavy smoker, his condition, which he chose in the end to ignore, was undoubtedly worsened by his abundant use of both tobacco and alcohol.

Yet time has been fairly kind to Kinsolving. If fame eluded him during his lifetime, he has become inadvertently linked to pop culture via his work in *The Outer Limits* and, in particular, *The Twilight Zone*. And while neither episode is a classic representation of either series, his presence supremely elevates both. As *Kildare* and *Novak* collect dust in their respective vaults, Scott and Ethan continue to entrance audiences in various incarnations of video, laserdisc and DVD. Thanks to technology, the pictures are sharper, the sounds crisper and Kinsolving sexier. And when film lovers are finally awarded the release of *The Dark At The Top Of The Stairs*, one can only assume the glorious Max Steiner score, combined with simple pleasures of its pure performances, will obliterate any memories of *The Three Musketeers* and *Beneath the Planet Of The Apes* – Mark Wahlberg's recent venture notwithstanding.

More interestingly, Kinsolving would undoubtedly ignite celebration were he young and working today. His ability aside, there is, like Clift, an ethereal quality which resonates from within: The soft, yet deliberate blink of his

inquisitive eyes; the slender frame; the mellifluous voice, at once reassuring, yet poised on the brink of sadness. All would be welcomed in contemporary television, film and – Kinsolving gazing languidly, half-looked – from the cover of *GG*.

Ultimately, Kinsolving belongs in the same ilk as Dease, Mineo and Nick Adams, rather than with the faded hacks of forgotten television. And while he merely sipped a taste of the fame that catapulted others, he left an intriguing mark nonetheless. Whatever acknowledgement Scott, Ethan and, hopefully, Sammy bring Kinsolving in time, it couldn't happen to an actor more deserving. ~~~

#### About the author

Gary Bennett is a freelance writer and independent filmmaker. He recently completed the short film *Beth and Sam*, and is currently developing *Suppose We Could Fly*, a fictional short film involving the final days of Lee Kinsolving. He is single and resides in Los Angeles.



Eve Arden & Lee Kinsolving in *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*

# REEL GOOD

## FILM REVIEWS

### INDIAN FILMS A-Z

by **BOB CHINN**

**BAAZI** (1951) Guru Dutt 126 min., B&W, Hindi \*\*1/2 Dev Anand, Geeta Bali, Kalpana Kartik, K. Dhawan, Smt. Roopa Varma, K.N. Singh

Guru Dutt's first directorial effort is a film noir styled melodrama that is a little rough around the edges, but still gives evidence of the remarkable talent for innovative song stylization which is to come.

The story concerns Madan (Dev Anand), an out-of-work cab driver whose sister is ill with tuberculosis. He falls in love with Rajni (Kalpana Kartik), a woman doctor who saves his sister's life. Madan joins a criminal organization to pay for his sister's medical expenses, even though Rajni, who comes from a wealthy family, has offered to do so. Rajni's feelings for Madan are noticed by her fiancé, Police Inspector Ramish (K. Dhawan), and her father (K.N. Singh). Rajni's father, it turns out, is the mysterious head of the crime ring Madan is involved with. When Madan discovers this dark secret, Ramish's father has him framed for the murder of the cabaret dancer Leena (Geeta Bali), who had been in love with Madan. To complicate matters even further, it seems that only Inspector Ramish, who is deeply in love with Rajni, can prove his rival innocent. In spite of the outrageousness of the plot, the main flaw in the film is Anand's overplaying of his part, making his character unbelievably obnoxious at times, in contrast to say, Kartik and Dhawan, whose underplaying adds a sense of realism to their roles.

**BAAZIGAR** (1993) Abbas Mustan 185 min., Color, Hindi \*\*1/2 Shahrukh Khan, Kajol, Shilpa Shetty, Siddharth, Dilip Tahil, Johnny Lever, Rakhee, Anam Mahadov. Bizarre melodramatic thriller which was a commercial hit in spite of the fact that screen hero Shahrukh Khan played an unusually vicious type of leading man. Ajay Sharma (Khan) seduces Seema (Shilpa Shetty) while simultaneously romancing her beautiful sister Priya (Kajol). On the verge of being discovered, he hides his deception by pushing Seema to her death from a tall building, something you usually wouldn't expect the hero to do. But apparently both Seema and Priya are the daughters of Madan Chopra (Dilip Tahil), a wealthy industrialist who, years

before, had ruined Ajay's father and stolen his company right out from under him, leaving the family destitute and eventually leading to his father's untimely demise. So it's a revenge thing, after all, and after becoming his dutiful son-in-law and gaining the confidence of Chopra, Ajay systematically begins to destroy him.

**BADE DIL WALA** (1983) Bhappi Sonee 144 min., Color, Hindi \*\*\* Rishi Kapoor, Tina Munim, Sarika, Aruna Irani, Bharat Bhushan, Jagdeep, Madan Puri, Kalpana Iyer, Roopesh Kumar, Jyoti Bakshi, Jankidas, Dhruval, Shivali, Bhushan Tiwari, Madhu Mahotra. Entertaining action melodrama about a kind-hearted hotel singer, Amer (Rishi Kapoor), who is framed for a robbery and sent to prison. After he is released as he confronts Bhawati Singh and Luska, the couple that framed him, the gun he's holding accidentally goes off, shooting Luska and Amer is forced to flee. On a train he meets an old friend, Vijay, who's travelling with his wife, Juhu and their small child, Muna, to visit the father-in-law he's never met. Before they arrive at their destination there's a train collision killing Vijay and Juhu, but leaving Amerit and Muna alive. Amerit takes the young child to the house of the grandfather, Mr. Sinha (Bharat Bhushan), who mistakes Amerit to be his son-in-law. Amerit tries to explain who he is but is told by the doctor that the truth might kill Mr. Sinha, whose health at the moment was precarious, at best. Reluctantly Amerit continues the masquerade as Vijay, taking over the duties of a son-in-law and improving Sinha's business in the process. Then Juhu's sister (Tina Munim) arrives on the scene with a wedding picture showing the real Vijay in her possession. 1950's matinee idol Bharat Bhushan shows that he still has it in him in the climactic fight scene that is both literally and figuratively a genuine cliff-hanger in every respect.



**BADLA** (1974) Vijay 150 min., Color, Hindi \*\*1/2 Shatrughan Sinha, Mouzumi Chatterjee, Johnny Walker, Padma Khanna, Mehmod, Ajit, Nirupa Roy, Aika, Shetty, Maru, Mohan Choti, Bhagwan. Tough guy Raju (Shatrughan Sinha) is a local extortionist who is the hero of those people he

protects because he takes his job seriously. He falls in love with the pretty Kalpana (Mouzumi Chatterjee) who he plans to eventually marry. To get Rs. 20,000 for his sister Asha's dowry, he undertakes a life of serious crime in the employ of a shady businessman, Rana Dhir.

Before the wedding Randhir tries to rape Asha in his high-rise apartment, but rather than submit to this degradation Asha jumps to her death. Enraged, Raju tries to kill Randhir but is caught and sentenced to two years imprisonment. When he is released Raju goes on the trail of revenge, tracking Randhir to Goa where he is a highly successful smuggler operating under the name of Pratap. Pratap receives word of Raju's impending arrival and he prepares a special welcome for him, luring him into a situation in which he is framed for the murder of Police Inspector Lobo. Comic character actor Johnny Walker makes an appearance as Johnny Fardanza, and the film boasts a lot of action as well as a blazing gun-battle climax. It is also interesting for its depiction of free love and the relaxed moral standards of the era while also exploiting the scantily-clad female body vogue of the early 70's.



**BAGHI SOORMEY** Krishan Sahani 154 min., Color, Punjabi \* Guggu Gill, Mithu, Ravinder Gill, Shivendra Mahal, Gurmurtan. Barnstorming Punjabi action melodrama is of interest only if you like overblown histrionics with the players constantly mugging to the camera. More like some kind of filmed stage play with nice location scene backgrounds. The story, such as it is, is about rebellion against the injustice of British Colonial rule. Jagga, a poor farmer joins the army but soon becomes aware of the injustice that the Indian servicemen have to bear under their British commanders. He decides to rebel and to convince others to take the first steps toward Independence. I'm generally pretty liberal with my ratings, so that should give you an idea about just how bad I thought this one is.

**BAHU BETI** (1965) T. Prakash Rao 135 min., B&W, Hindi \*\*1/2 Asha Kumar, Mala Sinha, Joy Mukerjee, Mehmod, Mumtaz. What starts out initially as a marital comedy turns into a gripping melodrama tackling a serious social issue which, in turn, is unfortunately marred by the frequent intrusion of some painfully gratuitous



(CULT MOVIES)

scenes of questionable slapstick comedy. Young and beautiful Shanta (Mala Sinha) marries a soldier who is called back to join his regiment before the marriage can be consummated. He is killed in an accident and Shanta is left a very young widow. Consumed by grief, she refuses food or water. Her concerned father-in-law (Ashok Kumar), a retired judge, sends her away to college so she can realize that she still has her whole life ahead of her. There, an enlightened young poet named Shekar (Joy Mukherjee) falls in love with her. Shanta is reluctant to reciprocate these feelings because of her duties and obligations to her husband's parents.

**BANDINI** (1963) Bimal Roy 145 min., B&W, Hindi \*\*\* Ashok Kumar, Nutan, Dharamendra, Raja Paranjayee, Tarun Bose, Asit Sen, Chandrima Bhaduri, Monty Chatterjee, Raj Varma, Satyendra Kapoor, Bhola, Benjamin, Lalit Rai, Abhimanyu. Bimal Roy's romantic idealism is very much in evidence in this 1963 classic set, for the most part, in a women's prison. Youthful, fresh-faced and innocent appearing Kalyani (Nutan, an arguably her finest film performance) is a Class C prisoner serving her sentence for murder when the volunteers, at risk of her own life, to nurse an inmate suffering from tuberculosis. The handsome young doctor Devendra (Dharamendra) falls hopelessly in love with her, but Kalyani rejects him because she doesn't want him to be affected by her tainted past. In a long flashback we become aware of the events leading up to Kalyani's present situation. She narrates the tragic story of a village postmaster's daughter who falls in love with the freedom fighter Bikash (Ashok Kumar), who promises to marry her but subsequently betrays her, marrying another woman instead. Dishonored and destitute, she leaves the village to save her father's reputation. In the city she gets a job as a servant in a small hospital, washing the dirty laundry and serving the patients. One woman patient, who takes particular delight in abusing her, turns out to be Bikash's wife. When the patient turns up dead, Kalyani is blamed and sentenced for murder.

**BANDIT QUEEN** (1994) Shekhar Kapur 119 min., Color, Hindi \*\*\* Seema Biswas,



Nirmal Pandey, Manoj Bajpai, Rajesh Vivek, Govind Namdeo, Saurabh Shukla. A controversial film that depicts some painfully graphic scenes of sexual violence and realistic eroticism in a manner that is highly unusual in the Indian Cinema. Set in Northern India's Chambal Valley and the surrounding area, this extraordinary picture is based on the exploits of real-life bandit Phoolan Devi. The film follows her life from an 11 year-old child bride who is brutally raped by her adult husband to her eventual surrender to the Indian government. In between is the story of a lower caste girl who is harshly and mercilessly exploited not only by her parents, but by the local village thakurs, the police, and a vicious gang of thakur bendits who subject her to a gang rape which lasts for three days. It is the story of a woman who became a legend when she dared to fight back against the

injustice of caste and the violence and violation she was made to endure. The film features an excellent performance by Seema Biswas in the title role. It is interesting to note that after her release from prison, the real Phoolan Devi became a politician, serving as Member of Parliament for Mitapur for some years before being assassinated in 2001.

**BARSAAT** (1949) Raj Kapoor 157 min., B&W, Hindi \*\*\*1/2 Raj Kapoor, Nargis,



Premnath, Nirmal, B.M. Vyas, K.N. Singh, Cuckoo, Ratan Gaurang, Wishwa Mehra, Dolly Baldev, Pushpa Bimla, Prakash Aurora, B.N. Kherra, M. S. Andow, Roman. In his second directorial effort Raj Kapoor explores the meaning of love. Pran (Raj Kapoor) is a sensitive and intense young poet who believes in the power and truth of love. His close friend Gopal (Premnath) is his polar opposite, a libertine playboy who lives for the moment. Gopal entices a trusting mountain village girl, Neela (Nirmal), with false promises and has his way with her. He promises to return and she vows that she will wait for him. Pran, on the other hand, finds true love when he meets the simple and innocent river maiden Reshma (Nargis). Her love inspires him to great heights and then to the depths of sorrow when she is washed away in the torrential river, a victim sacrificed to her father's pride and misplaced sense of honor. Somehow, Reshma manages to survive. Her unconscious body, is pulled out of the river by Bhola, a cruel half-witted fool who makes her a prisoner in his hut, with the intention of forcing her to marry him. It will take a strange twist of fate to reunite the two lovers, and make Gopal discover the true power of love. The film is highlighted by some fantastically beautiful chiaroscuro photography reminiscent of the Josef von Sternberg films of the 1920s and 1930s. The dialogue does, however, get a little ponderous and overly philosophical at times.

**BAATON BAATON MEIN** (1979) Basu Chatterjee 185 min., Color, Hindi \*\*\*1/2 Amol

Palekar, Tina Munin, David. India boasts a relatively diverse sociological and ethnological makeup. In a cosmopolitan city like Bombay there is a large population of Christian Indian families as well as Hindu Indian families — and Christian Indian families with Portuguese surnames as well, as evidenced in this family melodrama about two young people, Nancy Penara (Tina Munin) and Tony Braganza (Amol Palekar). Nancy and Tony see each other



on the train every morning on their way to work and eventually they start going out together and find that they enjoy each other's company. Both come from good middle-class Catholic families. Tony works as an illustrator and cartoonist (possibly an autobiographical reference as this was director Chatterjee's initial line of work) and Nancy works in an office while living with her mother Rosy and brother Saby (David), who is studying to be a musician. Since Nancy is of marriageable age her mother and uncle are naturally concerned about whether this relationship will reach that goal. But Tony has a mother that still sees him as a child — possibly resulting in his retarded emotional development because Tony himself is far too selfish and immature to make any kind of decision about his life one way or the other. When Nancy decides to break off their relationship he is forced to come to a new realization about himself. Of course the highlight of this film is the gorgeous Tina Munin.

**BAWARCHI** (1972) Hrishikesh Mukherjee Color, Hindi \*\*\* Rajesh Khanna, Jaya Bhaduri, Durga Khote, Usha Kiran, A.K. Hangal, Asrani, Pankaj, Kali Banerjee.

Delightful Hrishikesh Mukherjee film about the problems of an unhappy extended family, and how they are solved by a man they hire as their cook transcends its low budget to become no less than a minor masterpiece. Raghu (Rajesh Khanna), a bawarchi or cook looking for a job, enters Shanti Niwas and encounters the troubled household of retired postmaster Shivnath Sharma. There is his eldest son, Ramnath, a head clerk one year away from retirement who has a drinking problem, a lazy wife, Seeta Devi (Durga Khote), and an arrogant daughter, Meeta, who wants to be a dancer. Shivnath's second son Harinath was killed along with his wife in a car accident — but their beautiful, sweet young daughter Krishna (Jaya Bhaduri) lives there. Shivnath's third son, Kashadri, is a teacher who lives there with his wife Shobha Devi and their small son Renu. The youngest son, Babloo is an assistant music director in films — which means he doesn't do much of anything other than spending the day trying to become inspired. It is a family that seems consumed by petty jealousies and constant bickering. Raghu enters the household bringing with him not only a breath of fresh air, but the winds of sweeping change. He dazzles everyone with his quick, philosophical wit — then with his superb culinary skills. They soon come to know that he is not only a wonderful cook, but an accomplished poet, scholar, musician, dance instructor — there seems to be no limit to his talents. But his greatest accomplishment is in teaching the family how to live — through patience and compassion he brings the family together, reminding them of the love which they really do have for each other. The entire cast is excellent. The famous Marathi star Durga Khote shines as Seeta Devi, and you may remember Bengali actor Kali Banerjee from Satyajit Ray's Aparajito and Teen Kanya.



**BENAZIR** (1964) S. Khalil \*\*\*

Ashok Kumar, Meena Kumari, Shashi Kapoor, Tanuja, Nirupa Roy, Durga Khote, Tarun Bose, Asit Sen, Lata Sinha, Paul Mahinder, Qamar, Amir Merchant, Rekha, Bela Bose

In the 1934 earthquake in Bihar a man discovers a child crying in the rubble, while mourning the death of his own daughter. The years pass and the child in the rubble has grown up to become the famous dancer, Benazir (Meena Kumari), who has captured the heart of the Nawab (Ashok Kumar). The Nawab showers her with gifts and attention, even though his wife Sharban (Nirupa Roy) has just given birth to his son. Meanwhile the Nawab's handsome younger brother Anwar (Shashi Kapoor) and Sharban's younger sister Shaida (Tanuja) have fallen in love with each other and plans are made for their engagement. Anwar, however, cannot bear to see his sister-in-law miserable because of the Nawab's affair with Benazir, and he goes to the dancer's house to try and convince her to break it off. When she sees him, Benazir falls in love with Anwar. The Nawab arrives on the scene and misunderstanding his brother's intentions, attacks and beats him before suffering a heart attack. Anwar disappears to Bombay and Shaida's father breaks off the engagement because of the incident at Benazir's house. The Nawab's condition worsens, and on the threshold of death keeps calling for Benazir. Throwing her self-respect and honor out the window Sharban brings Benazir into her house to save her husband. When the Nawab recovers Benazir tells him the truth about why his brother Anwar was at her house before reuniting him with his selfless and devoted wife. Then Benazir leaves town to try and forget her own broken heart. In Bombay Anwar has become a door-to-door cosmetics salesman, and he calls on Benazir's door purely by chance. Seeing her, he flees out into the street and is run over by a speeding car. Benazir takes him to the hospital and spends all of her savings and jewelry on his recovery. When Anwar comes to realize what Benazir has done — not only for him, but for his brother and sister-in-law as well — he decides to devote his life to Benazir, because she is so very much in love with him. Yet Shaida, who he truly loves, is still waiting for him. It remains for Benazir to make the ultimate sacrifice.

**BETA** (1992) Indra Kumar 164 min., Color, Hindi \*\*\* Anil Kapoor, Madhuri Dixit, Anupam Kher, Lakshmi Kant Berde, Aruna Irani, Akash Khurana, Ajayash, Rita Bhaduri.

The child Raju longs for the mother who died shortly after his birth, so his father marries Nagmini (Aruna Irani) to give his son a mother. But the stepmother proves to be a viper in disguise, conspiring with her villainous brother (Anupam Kher) to take over the family fortune. The fly in the ointment is a stipulation that the entire estate is held in trust in Raju's name, and cannot be transferred or disposed of until he reaches his twenty-fifth



birthday. Nagmini digs in for the long wait to achieve her goal by keeping Raju uneducated so he is unable to read documents, contracts or account books. Nagmini even manages to get his father declared insane so that she can shut him away as a virtual prisoner in his own house. Through a false show of motherly love she wins Raju's undying and unconditional devotion — in fact, he worships her to the extent that he would be willing to kill anyone who said anything against her. Grown to manhood, Raju (Anil Kapoor) meets the beautiful Saraswati (Madhuri Dixit) at a wedding and falls in love with her. After he saves her from a rapist she marries him, but Nagmini, the evil stepmother has hatched a nefarious plan. The intelligent and strong-willed Saraswati, however, proves to be a more than worthy adversary, and a battle to the finish of wits and wills begins as she swears to right the injustices in the family. Unfortunately, she faces a seemingly insurmountable uphill battle against the blind love of her husband for his two-faced stepmother. This is a well-mounted production in the traditional Hindi film style — that is, unabashedly sentimental and unashamedly melodramatic. If that's your cup of tea, you'll enjoy this one very much.

**BHAIRAV** T.L.V. Prasad 135 min., Color, Hindi \*\* Mithun Chakravorty, Indrani Halder, Seema Sinha, Hemant Biju, Razaak Khan, Jack Goddard, Puneet Issar, Madhura, Parveen Khan, Bobby, Asha Singh, Ambrish, Sudha.

Chauvinistic action picture that doesn't make a whole lot of sense at first, but as the story progresses we start to realize what's going on. The mysterious hero, the garage owner Bhairav (Mithun Chakravorty) saves Poojas life, then proposes marriage to her before framing her as a prostitute and having her arrested. Then, seemingly out of the goodness of his heart, he takes in a sexy thief named Shanti and her two small nephews Ram and Shyam. He then renames Shanti as Sonali and marries her to perpetrate a fraud on the real Sonali. When Shanti questions him as to his motives for running Sonali's life, the true story comes out. Seven years ago Bhairav was Shankar, an honest and innocent young student who was in love with Priya. When a vicious prank by three schoolgirls results in the death of a drunken man, the girls falsely testify to frame Shankar, who had lost his examination ticket near the scene, for the murder. He is sentenced to seven years in prison, but the drunk the girls accidentally killed turns out to be gangster R.K. Jindal's brother. In retaliation against the innocent Shankar, Jindal kills Shankar's mother and sister and Priya, trapping them in the blazing inferno of their house that he has torched. When he is finally released from prison, Shankar, who has become Bhairav, carries out his elaborate plan of vengeance. So there you have it. It's all really pretty simple, after all.

**BHARATHI** (2001) Gnana Rajasekaran 156 min., Color, Tamil \*\*\*1/2 Sayaji Shinde,

Devayani, Nizhalgal, Ravi. Lush visuals and picturesque location work highlight this interesting film about Tamil Nadu's National Poet Subbaya Bharathi (Sayaji Shinde). The story begins with him as a precocious child who dazzles the local Maharaja with his brilliance, through his angry young man period in which he determines to speak out against the social injustices of his country, on through to his career as an outspoken social reformer, and his death. As a fearless patriot, Bharathi is portrayed as a headstrong, fervent nationalist that in later years, tended to be a megalomaniac who appeared somewhat touched in the head. His unconventional opinions cause his family a good deal of grief, and his inability to earn a decent living, keep his wife and children on the brink of starvation. Along the way he neglects his long-suffering wife, Chailams (Devayani), and alienates the Brahmin community with his unorthodox thoughts about caste and equality. He dies virtually an outcast and is mourned only by a few of his loyalist friends. Although the film is entertaining and enlightening, somehow you are left with the feeling that it should have been better.

**BHUMIKA** (1976) Shyam Benegal 142 min., Color, Hindi \*\*\*\* Smita Patil, Anant Nag, Amrish Puri, Amol Palekar, Naseeruddin Shah, Sulabha Deshpande, Kulbhushan Kharbanda, Baby Rukhsana, Amol Palekar, B.V. Khandu. The title, translated, means The Role, and the role of Usha, played by Smita Patil, is based on the life of the Marathi/Hindi actress Haasa Wadkar. Although the film opens in a later era, we are taken by flashback to the story's beginning, in pre-World War II Bengal. As a child, Usha is taught music by her grandmother, who at one time had been, herself, a singer and recording artist. When Usha's father dies, a neighbor, Keshav Dalvi (Amol Palekar) brings Usha, her mother and grandmother to Bombay to get the young girl in the movies. They audition Usha at Surya Movietone and she lands a singing role. Years later, she eventually becomes a star and marries Keshav, but even though they have a beautiful daughter, the marriage is not a happy one. Usha tries to find happiness with a succession of men in her life: her narcissistic male co-star, Rajan (Anant Nag), her intellectual director Sunil Verma (Naseeruddin Shah), and finally Kale (Amrish Puri), a wealthy landowner who keeps her a virtual prisoner in his palace. The film is especially interesting in the glimpses it gives you of period Indian movie making, scenes that are lushly photographed in rich sepia tones and black and white. As the era progresses into color filming, Benegal authentically recreates the colors we are familiar with from movies of that period, resulting in an artfully crafted masterpiece. There's a scene in the film in which Patil's character cares for a young woman who had been left an invalid after childbirth. In real life, Smita Patil died shortly after giving birth to a son in 1986, at age 30.

**BIWI NO. 2** Satyanarayana 134 min., Color, Hindi \*\*\* Nagarjun, Tabu, Heera Ragopal, Mohib. Any movie that has Tabu as a super cop beating up on the vicious bad guys has got to be a good one. The title translates as 2nd Wife, but Tabu is actually Wife #1 of Vishal (Nagarjun), a serious and dedicated police inspector who fell in love with and married fellow cop Inspector Archana (Tabu), after a decidedly unconventional courtship. They share a very happy married life that is blessed with the birth of a son. But fate intervenes and Archana and her son disappear in a fiery explosion, leaving Vishal to mourn for two years before his father and mother-in-law arrange

another marriage for him in an attempt to bring him out of his grief. His second wife is the beautiful Rekha (Heera Rajgopal) and they have only just left for their honeymoon when Archana and her son reappear. A solidly entertaining comedy of errors follows as Vishal tries to be two different husbands to two different wives.

**BLUFFMASTER** (1963) Manmohan Desai 137 min., B&W, Hindi \*\*\*1/2 Shammii Kapoor, Saira Bano, Niranjan Sharma, Mohan Choti, Lalita Pawar, Pran, Tun Tun, Rashid Khan, Charita Walker, Jugai Kishore, Shyamal, Anand Joshi, Santosh Kumar.

Shammii Kapoor turns in a faultless and electrifying performance as Ashok, the bluffmaster,

a young con-man with a glib tongue and a quick mind. He is constantly putting one over on the neighbors in his tenebrous building—

selling one man Brylcreem as a body building oil, and selling his illiterate neighbor a laundry receipt as a lottery ticket. Personable and handsome, he is able to charm almost anyone, by simply telling them what they want to hear. He steals a camera to get a photojournalist's job at a newspaper, but quickly runs afoul of the owner, a pretty young lady named Seema (Saira Bano). Seema fires Ashok, then rehires him to run interference for her against Kumar, a slimy businessman her guardian-uncle is trying to railroad her into marrying for his own personal gain. In the process, Seema and Ashok fall in love. Seema, however, insists on meeting Ashok's father to finalize their engagement, forcing Ashok to don a disguise and impersonate him. But his bluff is called when his mother (Lalita Pawar), a Rajput village woman, unexpectedly shows up and reveals that Ashok is, in reality, her Dabbu. Seema is angry and broken, hearted at his deception, and Ashok, or rather Dabbu, swears he has seen the light and will never, ever lie again. A repentant and reformed Dabbu confronts his neighbors with the lies he told them—and, hearing the truth, they throw him out of the building. Destitute and homeless, he wanders the streets when a killer sent by Kumar and Seema's uncle bungles the job of killing him and is forced to confess who sent him. Dabbu enlists the aid of Seema after she learns that it was her uncle who had killed her father. Kumar was a witness who has evidence linking her uncle to the murder, and he was using this as an edge to make her uncle a co-conspirator in his scheme to take over Seema's fortune. Together, Seema and Dabbu lay a trap for the villains to bring them to justice.

**BOMBAY KA BABOO** (1960) Raj Khosla 140 min., B&W, Hindi \*\*\* Dev Anand, Suchitra Sen, Nazir Hussain, Achla Sachdev, Dharmaraj, Rashid Khan, Manohar Deepak.

Superior Dev Anand melodrama in which he plays a criminal trying to go straight who unintentionally kills a gang boss in a fight, and is forced to hide out. He is blackmailed into impersonating the long lost son of a wealthy family as a set up for a robbery, but he falls in love with the daughter, who is the sister of the

man he's impersonating. Sound complicated? Well, it turns out that the gangster killed by Dev was the family's long-lost son. After some serious soul searching, Dev decides to step in to take his place in that family as the son that they believe him to be, and as the brother, instead of the husband, of the girl he loves.

**BOMBAY** (1995) Mani Ratnam 134 min., Color, Hindi \*\*\*\* Aravind Swamy, Manisha Koirala, Nasser, Kitty, Radhika, Tinsu Anand. In a Tamil village a Hindu man (Aravind Swamy) falls in love with a Muslim girl (Manisha Koirala). They marry in spite of the opposition of their respective parents. The story of their happy union and growing family is set against the background of a country caught up in a violent period of transition. They are unwilling witnesses to the growing religious fanaticism that led to the destruction of the Babri Masjid by Hindu fanatics, and the resulting bloody 1993 Bombay Riots which split the city into rival warring religious factions intent on bringing death and destruction in their wake. Separated from their parents by the riots before being separated from each other, two children try to survive the bloody turmoil of a senseless civil war. In the midst of all this is a heartfelt plea for tolerance and unity by a family that represents both sides. The film was very controversial in India upon its release.

**BORDER** J.P. Dutta 175 min., Color, Hindi \*\*\* Sunny Deol, Tabu, Jackie Shroff, Sunil Shetty, Rakhee Gulzar, Pooja Bhatt, Akshay Khanna.

Award winning dramatization of a battalion of Indian Army soldiers on the India-Pakistan border in West Rajasthan as the clock ticks down to the hostilities leading to the Battle of Longewala on December 5, 1971. Songs are well integrated into the storyline, coming mostly in the flashback sequences so they don't disrupt the mounting tension at the front. Excellent story is highlighted by fine performances. Sunny Deol is outstanding as the Sikh commander. Jackie Shroff gives a fine performance as an Air Force officer, and Sunil Shetty won the Best Supporting Actor Award as the Raja of Rajasthan who commanded the Camel Corps. Indian war films are few and far between and this is definitely one of the best.

**BRAMACHARI** (1968) Bhappi Sonie 155 min., Color, Hindi \*\*\*1/2 Shammii Kapoor, Rajshree, Mumtaz, Pran, Dharmaraj, Madhavi, Mohanchoi, Asit Sen, Krishnan Dhawan, Manmohan, Jagdeep. Shammii Kapoor comedy in which she stars as Bramachari, a nice but unambitious guy who has turned his small house into an orphanage where he cares for a dozen or so small children that have been abandoned. Bramachari moonlights as a nightclub singer, on the side. He comes across a poor, young village girl, Sheetal (Rajshree) who is about to commit suicide because she was rejected by Ravi (Pran), the prospective groom in an arranged marriage. He takes her back to his ashram where she and the

children hit it off with each other almost immediately. Bramachari gives her his word that he will see to it that the man who rejected her falls in love with her. Bramachari then proceeds to transform Sheetal from the village rustic that she is into a femme fatale. He succeeds all too well, and Ravi—womancing cad that he is—falls in love with this new woman and wants to marry her, oblivious of the fact that she is the girl he had previously rejected. But when push comes to shove, Sheetal discovers that she really can't stand Bramachari. Ravi, however, is not about to give up, and he decides to prove that he is a cruel and heartless villain as well. At this point the comedy turns into a melodrama that works itself up, interestingly enough, to a suspenseful action climax.

**BULANDI** T. Rama Rao 175 min., Color, Hindi \*\*\*1/2 Anil Kapoor, Rajnikant, Rekha, Ravenna Tandon, Sadashiv, Amrnapurkar, Shakti Kapoor, Harish, Aruna Irani. The conflict between the modern world and the feudal world of rural Indian society is depicted in this popular Hindi film set in Bharatpur, a village where the local Thakur tradition dispenses enlightened justice to the populace. The story spans three generations of the ruling Thakur family. Dharmaraj Thakur, known as Dadathakur (Anil Kapoor) is the current supreme head of the family and, as head of the panchayat he settles all the disputes and problems of the villagers. His right hand man is his brother, Arjun (also Anil Kapoor), a powerful, highly moral and totally devoted man who knows how to serve his elder brother faithfully and keep order in the village. The youngest brother is Nakul (Harish) who, along with Arjun, was raised from childhood by Dadathakur's beautiful wife Laxmi (Rekha), who selflessly gave up any thought of having her own child so she could devote herself to them. Arjun is engaged, then married to Meena (Ravina Tandon), the daughter of a wealthy business tycoon who disrupts the family with her modern values, westernized ways and air of superiority. It is only when she sees her visiting billionaire father humbly bowing before Dadathakur and acknowledging him as the reason for his success that Meena begins regarding the tradition-bound household in a new light. Gradually, she becomes enlightened and respectful of the customs and culture of the new life she has entered into. The

protagonist is Jagannath Thakur (Shakti Kapoor), who is out for revenge against the family that branded him an outcast. A Tamil superstar Rajnikanth appears in the film as the patriarch, Ramuthakur, whose assassination

sparked an enmity that divided the family for eighteen years. Solidly entertaining, with exciting martial arts sequences, tear-jerking melodrama, good song picturizations and questionable but palatable comedy relief scenes. Anil Kapoor is totally convincing in his dual role. Rekha is like a goddess, and Rajnikant lends an awesome presence to the proceedings.---



# BOOK REVIEWS

**Me and the Dead End Kid**  
by Leo Gorcey, Jr. (Leo Gorcey  
Foundation, 2003, 293 pages)



Written by Leo Gorcey's son. This is an informally written book based mostly on the personal experiences and feelings of the son of the Dead End Kid. It describes much of Gorcey Sr.'s early childhood memories and of his dysfunctional upbringing. Raised in the depression with an actor father and a bootlegger for a mother, it is really miraculous that Gorcey Sr. managed to catch and hang on to any job at all. Much of what Gorcey Jr. learned about his father the actor was based on letters and contact with his dad's fans. He was forbidden as a kid to see any of the movies Gorcey Sr. had made.

There are a few rare photos in the book plus family snapshots from Gorcey Jr.'s childhood reproduced in black and white which serve their purpose to show different locations that the Gorceys resided and some shots of Gorcey Sr.'s mother (a gorgeous woman) and his family life. The photos are a bit on the small size and no mention of the two Bela Lugosi films, *Spooks Run Wild* and *Ghosts On the Loose* (At least none that I could find.) No matter regarding the small photos, this book speaks from the heart and once you start reading it, you begin to get the feel for the real Dead End Kid and what made him exactly that. Meeting Gorcey Jr. I could see the depth in him that one achieves only through a lot of personal pain and growth. His father would be proud.

Personally AUTOGRAPHED copies of the book are available only through the Leo Gorcey Website:  
<http://www.leogorcey.com>  
-Reviewed by Coco Kiyonaga

**Eaten Alive at a Chainsaw Massacre: The Films of Tobe Hooper by John Kenneth Muir**, 198 pages, 2003, McFarland & Co. With an informal and accessible tone (author Muir uses such expressions as "half-assed" and "gonzo-energetic"), *Eaten Alive at a Chainsaw Massacre: The Films of Tobe Hooper* examines the cinematic offerings of director Hooper with both a biographical section and a "films of" section.

All the important films – *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Polyester*, *Salem's Lot* – are well-covered, as are the oft-told production stories (the grueling conditions of *Chainsaw*, the Spielberg controversy of

*Polyester*). And while Muir gives an intriguing mention to Hooper's first feature-length film, 1969's *Eggshells*, in the biographical chapter, there is neither a review of *Eggshells* in the film section nor an explanation as to why it's missing from the book (I'm assuming *Eggshells* is – however rare – still extant, as there's plenty of information about it on the internet). And not is there a single mention of 1971's *The Windsplitter*, a film in which Hooper appeared as an actor. Both *Eggshells* and *The Windsplitter* are significant to the genesis of the seminal *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*; Hooper directed *Chainsaw* actor Allen Dazinger previously in *Eggshells*, and acted alongside Jim Siedow (*Chainsaws 1 & 2*) in *The Windsplitter*.

But Muir offers some good insights into Hooper's films, as when he notes that an integral part of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*'s success is the fact that its young protagonists (and thusly the audience) are denied any real knowledge of the depraved Texas clan that serves as the film's villains. But for every valid insight, there is an example of the author's over-analysis: "Again, it can't be stressed enough that the armadillo is overturned..."

A valuable reference despite any gaps or needless deconstruction, *Eaten Alive at a Chainsaw Massacre* also contains information on Hooper's telefilms and episodic television work, and appendices. Available from McFarland & Company. 1-800-253-2187.  
[www.mcfarlandpub.com](http://www.mcfarlandpub.com)

-Reviewed by Mike Malloy

**Drive In Dream Girls**  
(A Galaxy of B-Movie Starlets of the Sixties. Written by Tom Lisanti. McFarland & Co. 350 pages, with 178 photos)

This is the third in author Tom Lisanti's sexy sixties sweethearts trilogy, and it picks up where his first book (*Fantasy Femmes of Sixties Cinema*) leaves off in many ways. While the first tome chronicles the likes of Lana Wood and Yvonne Craig who went on to more movie and television work after their sex-bitten stage, many of Mr. Lisanti's subjects in this book completely left the business or returned to theatre work when the innocent sunny surf, ski, and spy genres had run their course.

Just as in his first two books, *Fantasy Femmes* and *Femme Fatales*, *Drive-In*

*Dream Girls* contains twenty in-depth interviews with women as varied as Gail Gilmore, Quinn O'Hara, and Luree Holmes, followed by updates on thirty others including Patty Chandler, Susan Hart, Mikki Jamison, and the late Claudia Marain. Readers familiar with American International Pictures and its magic touch with the youth-plotation genres of its day will be intrigued to find out that AIP founders Jim Nicholson market tested the films with his own three teenage offspring. "One of the things we kids always complained about was that in every movie – other than my father's – the teenagers were always old, the actors looked thirty-five. Kids didn't like that," relates Luree Holmes (one of the Nicholson-daughter triumvirate). Holmes appeared in no less than twelve of her father's pictures only to walk away when the dynamics at AIP changed with her father losing 25% of his AIP shares, upon his divorce from Luree's mother in 1965.

Ms. Holmes (now going under her Nicholson name) gives the long overdue low-down on what really went on behind the scenes with the company. Her take is forthright ("Until his death, Sam had been re-writing history for years,") and her love and admiration for her late father is evident. The directions AIP might have taken are tantalizingly between the lines as she relates her eye-witness account that is fair and informative.

As usual, Lisanti gets a myriad of answers to the "whatever happened to?" question from his subjects, with Gail Gilmore presenting an eye-opener: after an intense SIX films – all made in 1965 – she met counter culture writer Terry Southern and moved to New York with him. "I decided I didn't want to be an actor," she emphatically states. For anyone else that would be the end of the show-biz saga, but not for Gilmore, who spent over thirty years with Southern the writer of 1969's *Easy Rider*. When next you see her endlessly graying next to Aron Kincaid in *Girls on the Beach*, run to this book to contrast it with her jaw-dropping accounts of life on the *Easy Rider* set!

Other touchstones of the sixties are given equal space by Lisanti with the accounts of the past several decades. Scottish red-head Quinn O'Hara returned to the stage instead of Hollywood after her film-fling starring in *The Ghost In The Invisible Bikini*. Whereas honey-haired Look magazine covergirl Patti Chandler's chances for stardom waned quickly in the wake of her break-up with a pre-Farrah Fawcett Lee Majors.

In addition to the fifty chapter subjects, this book includes a thoughtful, well-written forward by actress Carole Wells, offering a view of a mid-century Hollywood that is as different from 2003 as 1963 was from the silent era.

Tom Lisanti does a great service to fans of these movies, actresses, and the times. He confirms what the baby-boomers know and



## Eye on Science Fiction

29 Interviews with Classic SF and Horror Filmmakers

Tom Weaver. 384pp., 2003, \$39.95  
hardcover, 134 photos, filmographies,  
index, 0-7864-1657-2.



## The Poe Cinema

A Critical Filmography of  
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Don G. Swarth. 315pp., 2003, \$35 soft-  
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raphy, index, 0-7864-1703-X.



## Monty Python, Shakespeare and English Renaissance Drama

David Lansen. 246pp., 2003, \$35  
softcover, bibliography, index,  
0-7864-1504-3.

# BOOKS ON FILM



## Walter B. Gibson and The Shadow

Thomas J. Shirefield. 200pp., 2003, \$45  
hardcover, photos, appendix, bibliog-  
raphy, index, 0-7864-1466-9.



## Monte Hellman His Life and Films

Brad Stevens. 224pp., 2003, \$35 softcover,  
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## Dreams on Film

The Cinematic Struggle  
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Leslie Halpern. 209pp., 2003, \$32 softcover,  
photos and illustrations, filmography,  
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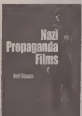
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the X and Y generation can only imagine: That the times were a changing but for those who were there it was a once in a lifetime opportunity to work and live the dream that all the post-war generation aspired to. And that it really was as much fun as it looked!

-Reviewed by Katherine Orrison

**The Immortal Count: The Life and Films of Bela Lugosi**  
by Arthur Lennig. University Press of Kentucky, 548 pages.

In 1974 the first edition of this book was published. It became the bible of perhaps everyone reading this magazine. But it sold out quickly, and no second editions were ever printed again. Those who got a copy were lucky. I've seen copies sell for everywhere from \$15 to \$300 depending on how in the know the dealer, how needy the customer, and how strong the economy at the time.

At last it's back, in an all new version, with virtually every line re-written by Prof. Lennig, the book expanded to virtually twice the original size. The author has done a lot of research, some of it in the pages of *Cult Movies Magazine*. Sometimes the text is strengthened, sometimes it's not. He devotes a lot of time to offering his opinion of Bela Jr, who is not the subject of this book, although as a young man he was certainly of importance to the Great Man himself.

There are some new and different photos illustrating the book than in the 1974 edition. So, if you're new to Bela, or if you want to celebrate the 30 year anniversary of this book in a special way, this book is highly suggested. Tell em WE sent you, and WE LL be glad you did.

-Reviewed by Michael Copner

**Profoundly Disturbing Shocking Movies That Changed History!**  
by Joe Bob Briggs. Universe, 253 pages. \$24.00 to order call: 702-438-1549.

Joe Bob Briggs writes about underground cult movies. The movies that he says, that have unexpectedly and often unintentionally revolutionized the way that all movies would be made. These overlooked movies pioneered new cinematographic techniques, subversive narrative structuring and guerrilla marketing strategies that would eventually trickle up to mainstream cinema. In *Profoundly Disturbing* he has chosen to review 15 of those movies. Amongst the reviewed are *Shogun*, *Reservoir Dogs*, *The Exorcist*, *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, *Creature from the Black Lagoon*. Joe Bob writes with such logic that it is hard to fault him as he takes the reader through his thought process and the history behind the movies and their success and impact on the film industry. This is one of the better guides to take you through course 101 in Shocking Movies.

-Reviewed by Coco Klyonaga

## What EVIL hath wrought! by David Yuers

... the horror story, beneath its fangs and fangy wig, is really as conservative as an Illinois Republican in a three-piece pinstriped suit; its main purpose is to reaffirm the virtues of the norm by showing us what awful things happen to people who venture into taboo lands. Within the framework of most horror tales we find a moral code so strong it would make a Puritan smile.

Stephen King  
DANSE MACABRE

Watch Horror Films . . . Help Keep America Strong.  
Bob Wilkins  
Host of Creature Features

As an aficionado of the horror genre most of my reading consists of the study of horror literature and film, biographies on directors, stars, writers and other creators as well as the never-ending film encyclopedias, guides and collections annually cranked out by the baker's dozen. Consequently I was delighted to find this recent critical analysis of the appeal of the horror genre that takes a fresh and deeply compelling look not only at the horror genre itself but the culture that has spawned it as well.

Author E. Michael Jones (PhD) succeeds in defining what truly lays at the heart of horror's appeal: the innate and primal enjoyment of reading or viewing the violation of eternal truths and the consequences suffered by innocent and guilty alike for those transgressions — until balance is restored to a moral universe once again. Or in short, evil running amok until it is vanquished in the last chapter (or final reel).

Reading Dr. Jones' outlook on horror was a bracingly provocative experience. It was certainly a departure from the endless p.e. bogus subtexts readers are regularly subjected to when reading studies of the horror genre. Gender roles, imperialism, class warfare, the Cold War, homosexuality (especially homosexuality it seems lately), the environment, race relations ad nauseam ad infinitum (I even read one article saying that the Terminator films were an argument for gun control!) quickly become a tiresome litany promoting a left-wing socio-political viewpoint rather than a valid examination of the genre's appeal. Granted, some of these treatises are occasionally valid; Eric Greene's *Planet of the Apes* as American Myth: Race, Politics and Popular Culture is much more on target in his critique of that series than not, — but in the great majority of these trendy reviews, articles and books the writer simply misses

the point.

Dr. Jones brings us back on track: the transgressions of Science with respect to Life, the consequences of Enlightenment hubris, the dismissal of the Sacred and the abandonment of God created a reaction in the world of literature (and later film) that we now call the Horror genre. These are the true subtexts to be found in any serious critique. And why are they always there? Because ever since the Enlightenment — when Man replaced God's morality with his own, (The Terror [French Revolution] was just a warm-up) he has repeatedly suffered the consequences of doing so. Marx and Nietzsche spawned Communism and Nazism and mankind waded through the waist deep blood that was spilled throughout the worst century of evil in recorded history — eugenics, planned economies, social Darwinism and other scientific achievements lay waste to life and sanity itself from Lenin to Mao. As a consequence of our attempt to rationally control nature we released the Monsters from the lid that will always appeal to the latently ingrained moral compass written on every man's heart.

Unfortunately the average commentator and critic of the horror genre only seem capable of approaching this fascinating topic from a post-modern, deconstructionist, Gramscian point of view, utterly lacking any cognitive understanding of any mindset other than their own; which is that of the postmodernist.

Therefore to those of us who still subscribe to a belief in self-evident Truth, a Moral Order and Natural Law — and never bought into the existential post-modern nihilistic moral relativism that has succeeded in dominating the intellectual and creative pursuits of the last century in particular — this book offers a welcome respite from the navel-gazing silliness so often encountered by reading the texts of those who seem to totally lack a grounded historical perspective. The respite, as longed-for as it is, is even more so welcomed by the fresh and innovative approaches Dr. Jones takes.

Dr. Jones also demonstrates that the storms of contention addressed by Frankenstein are as relevant as ever. I've lost count of how many commentaries I've read on cloning, organ-growing, genetic manipulation and stem-cell research entitled, *Paging Doctor Frankenstein*. . . as yesterday's fantastic horrors become today's mundane realities. Of course I relish examining Jack Pierce's wonderful make-up on the Frankenstein Monster as much as the next fan and will chew over

and deliberate on the merits and flaws of Boris Karloff's, Lon Chaney's, Bela Lugosi's and Glenn Strange's interpretation of the character with the best of them. But sometimes – in our love of these fantastic creatures – we forget the genesis of their creation. Besides being terrific chillers, most of the stories were written with serious moral subtexts to convey as well. And in the twentieth century – writers from H.P. Lovecraft to Curt Siodmak, Richard Matheson to Stephen King, whether conscious or not – have been successful because they have innately understood this.

It was in the 18th, not the 20th, century that modern horror as we know it first emerged (See *Living In Fear: A History of Horror in the Mass Media*, by Les Daniels – for a more thorough examination of this subject). The 18th century was the time period that gave birth to influences such as the Marquis De Sade because it was also the era of the Enlightenment; which quickly led to *The Terror*.

Mary Shelley took an amalgam of 18th century personages (Luigi Galvani, the discoverer of 'medical electricity', the Marquis de Sade – Jones goes into an extensive examination of the man's influence on our culture even today – Adam Weishaupt, Erasmus Darwin and of course, Mary Shelley's own father: William Godwin), mixed them with men she knew intimately in the 19th century such as Lord Byron and her own infamous husband – and created the character of Doctor Victor Frankenstein.

Dr. Frankenstein is the personification of the modern man who sees the physical flesh as nothing but material while the soul itself is merely an animating spark of electricity. Kenneth Branagh – the latest successor of Colin Clive and Peter Cushing – inadvertently makes this point when Jones quotes him as saying, "the logic is inescapable – one day human beings will discover the secrets of the ageing process and learn how to halt it. If man is perfectible then one day man will become immortal." Jones seems to shake his head in response, in effect saying, "You just don't get it do you?" when he comments, "Given such noble sentiments we are always puzzled when the outcome is so horrific. As long as we cannot confront the Enlightenment on its own terms and refute it, the culture will crave Mary Shelley's makeshift solution, and remakes of *Frankenstein* will appear." Deep down we know that Frankenstein is a villain though, don't we? Do audiences prefer Colin Clive, Basil Rathbone, Cedric Hardwicke or even Kenneth Branagh or Peter Cushing? Who – in most people's minds – is the 'real' Frankenstein? I would argue that Peter Cushing's interpretation of the character is the most popular among genre fans precisely because Cushing's

characterization is the least sympathetic.

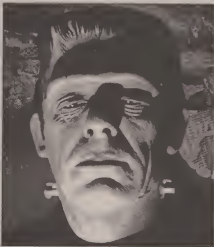
*Dracula* illuminates science's efforts to eradicate the consequences of violating the moral order as well. Although, unlike *Frankenstein*, which is more focused on the scientific perversion of life and the consequences entailed, *Dracula* examines the other historical consequences of sexual transgressions: disease. When one transgresses sexual boundaries the plague of the vampire (who was not – contrary to Bela Lugosi's cosmopolitan, mysteriously deliberate and continental portrayal – romantic in Bram Stoker's novel) is the result. This was obvious in the first *Dracula* film, *Nosferatu* (recall the plague of rats that infected the city of Bremen). Bram Stoker's vampire hunters utilize science's recent inventions and gadgets when pursuing the ancient demon yet in the last pages resort to simple Bowie and Kukri knives to eliminate him. The blade is as

mere creature that has given up his humanity and become a slave to lust. In *Dracula*'s case his lust is for blood and he is so enthralled with that craving that he rejects the cross. "Its deadly pleasures," wrote Saint Augustine of lust, "were a chain I dragged along with me, yet I was afraid to be freed from it." As Jones says, "Lust, in other words, is parasitic, and as such, there exists between it and the blood parasite syphilis a natural affinity. This is expressed through a symbolic figure like the vampire, who infects his host and drains him of vitality – of blood."

As Jones writes, "Whereas Christ shed his blood so that his followers could have eternal life; *Dracula* shed his followers' blood so that he could have eternal life. *Dracula* is a reworking of Christianity according to the canons of Social Darwinism. The monster is simply the inversion of Christianity that was taking place throughout Europe as once again the Enlightenment was implemented through one of its pseudo-scientific ideologies.

"In a satanic way typical of the reversal of Christian order that the vampire creates, man achieves immortality through immortality and by infecting others – that is, through lust. Christianity exalts love; vampirism – Darwin's survival of the fittest pushed to its extreme – exalts the hunger of desire. Man under the thrall of lust as epitomized by this disease, loses his reason and becomes a zombie bound to do the bidding of the pale treponema, the white worm. Man is thus made a function of nature, much as the Marquis de Sade said he was."

Dr. Jones observes other novels and films of course, and pays a significant amount of attention to *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (he points out something I had never considered before: that the male and female protagonists in the book and film are the only characters who are divorced), *Forbidden Planet* (the Krell are troublesomely close to the human race now, at this time, at the dawn of the 21st century), *Psycho* ("What no one seemed to notice at the time is that it took sexual liberation as its starting point as well, and then in the inchoate chain of causality typical of the genre, tried to explain how sexual liberation led, first through sin and then through crime to death.") and *Alien* ("a meditation on the technological means needed to destroy fertility and the psychic ambivalence that results from using those means."). Reading it I came away with a new understanding of why, despite his technical virtuosity, Stanley Kubrick's 2001: *A Space Odyssey* has no visceral appeal and why *The Shining* fails on every level as a horror film



ancient as recorded history and more effective than telegraphs, gramophones or even blood transfusions. Because Stoker was himself plagued (with what Jones suspects was syphilis), the genesis of *Dracula* becomes evident as well. As Jones writes, "Only with the rise of Darwinian biology and its pseudo-metaphysics based on blood does the deadly contamination of the blood by syphilis become of supreme importance. That is, only with the concept of the purity of blood raised to the level of metaphysical keystone does *Dracula*, the poisoner of blood, become the ultimate terror."

For a hundred years now everyone, horror fan and casual observer alike, has known of *Dracula*'s loathing of the redemptive power of the cross. *Dracula* is condemned to be a

(whereas someone like Eastern Orthodox Edgar Ulmer and practicing Catholic Alfred Hitchcock created works that hold far more appeal to me and, I suspect, the readers of this magazine).

A director like David Cronenberg may not be aware on a conscious level of the appeal of horror but Jones does when he excerpts a quote from Cronenberg who named the school in *The Brood* the Krell School after the extinct race of superior beings in *Forbidden Planet*. I hadn't realized the film had a similar premise to *Forbidden Planet* until I picked the name for the school. He said. Then I made the connection: creatures from the unconscious, making the mental physical. That's what the *The Brood* and *Forbidden Planet* are really about. Wes Craven's rubber reality of *Fredy Krueger* and the *Spanish Mass Murders* episode of *Kolchak: The Night Stalker* spring readily to mind here — as does *Fiend Without A Face*, as further evidence of many more other examples that I'm sure are out there. (Who can forget the STAY-PUFT Marshmallow Man?)

There was nothing within him; neither conscious, nor reason, that was even remotely human — Donald Pleasance as Doctor Loomis describing The Shape from *Halloween II*.

Whether they are *Body Snatchers*, *Krell*, *The Thing From Another World*, a *Terminator*, *Jason Voorhees*, *Dracula*, Michael Myers, or the Alien that one character in the movie of the same name describes as unclouded by conscience, remorse or delusions of morality, the arrival of the monster, Jones says, is the admission of what everyone knows, but what no one can admit.

Some may say. What of the simple enjoyment of being scared? After all, tales of witches, ghosts, hobgoblins and demons were popular before the Enlightenment and children who are unaware of eugenics, Social Darwinism, sexual dynamics and other subtexts enjoy the stories of the Brothers Grimm to *Scooby Doo*. But even these simple stories have ALWAYS been morality tales. The difference now is that many of the creators and viewers are less aware of this truism than those — from Sophocles to Shakespeare — who preceded them prior to the Enlightenment.

For all of the book's merits I must confess that I was disappointed to see Dr. Jones ignore *The Wolfman* or any of its sequels. He neglects Val Lewton's films as well. His contention is that because these films occurred in the 1940s, when *The Grapes of Wrath* could tell right from wrong and was in the midst of fighting real evil (those who had raped Nanking, gassed Ethiopia and were in the process of systematically eliminating entire races and religions) these films don't seem to hold up as well. Dr. Jones writes, Boris Karloff, Lon Chaney, and Bela Lugosi continued to make their kind of film during the 1940s, but this had more to do with Hollywood's penchant for

sequels than anything else.

This time I'm afraid he is the one missing the point. How many sequels to Westerns was Hollywood making? Or War movies? Musicals? Comedies? I know detectives (*Charlie Chan*, *Mr. Moto*, *Sherlock Holmes*, *The Thin Man*) had many sequels but that is all. Why? Because the detective story, like



the horror story — contains both a mystery and a formula that solves the mystery.

The reason there were so many *Ghosts of Frankenstein* and *Sons of Dracula* is because they were enormously popular! These films would not have been made and Lon Chaney's *Wolfman* would not have prowled through FIVE films in that decade if there weren't some type of resonance throughout the culture that the character engendered! Curt Siodmak, the creator of the *Wolfman*, was onto the real reasons for the *Wolfman*'s appeal as well. As he states in the forward to Donald Glut's *Classic Movie Monsters*, The protagonist in a monster movie, through some character flaw or error of judgment, helped create or release the monster which he now must aid or exorcise. Siodmak referred to this as hamartia, the Greek word meaning an error in judgment resulting from a defect in the character of a tragic hero. And the *Wolfman* is exhibit A in Siodmak's thesis: Why hamartia in monster movies? The best reason perhaps is that it cements the vital link of identification between both protagonist and monster; the identification is most rich, complete and profound, however, when the monster and the

protagonist are themselves (as in *The Wolfman*) causally linked through the creator's ethical responsibility for the created.

Dr. Jones could easily reinforce his thesis here. Whereas Henry Frankenstein and his sons Wolf and Ludwig were ostensibly on a quest for greater knowledge, the betterment of mankind and the triumph of science — Boris Karloff's Dr. Niemann in *House of Frankenstein* labors under no such grandiose inspirations. No, his motivations fall under the categories of revenge and simple sadistic morbidity. While Dr. Niemann was conducting his experiments in the fictional village of Visaria, Dr. Mengele was engaged in the same practices in the all-too-horribly-real compound of Auschwitz. The two would have gotten along famously. Mengele ended his days as an abortionist in Brazil. Niemann was dragged into a pit of quicksand by the Frankenstein Monster.

Even the latter-day so-called Frankensteins of today cause Frankenstein himself to look good in comparison. Consequently *House of Frankenstein* should not be so lightly dismissed as in many cases Karloff's Dr. Niemann would be a more appropriate point of comparison to modern day monsters (Jack Kevorkian, Peter Singer) than any of the Frankenstein brood!

Nor should the *House of Dracula* be dismissed either. When Jones writes about the contamination of blood and *Dracula*, the poisoner of blood, becoming the ultimate terror, his thesis is there for all to see in the fate of Onslow Stevens Dr. Edelmann.

To conclude the metaphor of the *House of Horror*, Jones himself reveals that in a culture that embraces death — it is no wonder that we continue to reside there. By following our illicit desires to their logical endpoint in death, we have created a nightmare culture, a horror-movie culture, one in which we are led back again and again to the source of our mysterious fears by forces over which we have no control. It is a little like watching the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* over and over again and watching the hippies dance inexorably to their doom in the uncanny house that has become not a place of refuge, but of slaughter instead. That house has become our culture.

John Paul the Second has stated repeatedly that we live in a Culture of Death. Therefore, to those who still believe in a moral order, we are actually residing in a House of Death. When this culture decides to — as a writer of great wisdom wrote millennia ago — choose life — we might see the decline of the horror genre. *The Horror Tale* may then return to its pre-18th century status as a clear morality tale rather than what Jones convincingly argues it remains today. Monsters from the Id. Observing the direction the horror genre has gone over the last few decades I for one will not lament this. —



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# Confessions of a Monster Boomer

by  
**Frank J. Dello Stritto**

In the 1950s and 1960s, when I first saw the movies that I now write about, some of the most popular hobbies for boys were building and painting plastic models, collecting baseball picture cards and collecting stamps. The movie monsters invaded the domains of toy models and picture cards decades ago. Over the past few years, the monsters have been turning up on stamps from all over the world. The great surge came during the horror centennial celebrations of 1997, but the flow has never really stopped, and a tally of what stamps are out there may be timely. But first a little history on how the once-staid world of stamp collecting invited the monsters in.

As anyone old enough to remember knows, stamps of 50 years ago could be rather dull: as often as not somber portraits in muted tones of persons long dead. One of them was Edgar Allan Poe, on an American 3-cent stamp issued in 1949, the centennial of his death. This stamp is still easy to find, and still surprisingly cheap. More pricey is the next stamp devoted to a "horror" figure, Vlad Tepes, the historical Dracula, issued by Rumania in 1959. Vlad appeared again on a Rumanian stamp, for the last time to date, in 1976.

Mr. Hyde appears on a 1969 Samoan stamp in a set celebrating Robert Louis Stevenson. This was as close as to popular horror as the stamp world then cared to venture. The next horror stamp would not be for more than 20 years.

Those decades saw a great upheaval in the postal world. The monopolies of the national postal services yielded to new technologies and new businesses. Their wake-up call came from the telephone companies. Even in the 1960s, a "long distance" telephone call was seen as a costly indulgence reserved for holidays and announcements of births and deaths. With the breakup of Ma Bell and the plummet of long distance rates, the middle class could call instead of write. Federal Express and the other overnight carriers gave mailers an alternative. By the 1980s—even before the internet and cellular phones took hold—the US Postal Service, Royal Mail in Britain and other aloof national postal regimes were looking to replace lost revenue. They then discovered what their counterparts in third-world countries had always known: easy money was to be made not only from stamp collectors, but from all kinds of collectors.



Even the smallest of countries and quasi-independent territories are equal to the great superpowers in one sense: they alone can legally issue stamps bearing their names. In the 1960s, while the national postal services still reigned supreme, the tiny post offices of such "states" began putting their names on stamps covering a vast variety of topics, few of which had any relation to the so-called issuing country. They were specifically designed to attract collectors, and went directly from manufacturers' mints to stamp dealers. Stamps on topics ranging from the popes to baseball players to cartoon characters flooded the market. Few ever touched the soil of their native land. Even some ardent collectors of such stamps had only a vague notion of the location of places like "Ajman," "Bhutan," "Iso," and "Staffa."

These often colorful, free-wheeling "topicals" divided the stamp-collecting world into bitterly opposed camps. The traditionalists dubbed them "wallpaper stamps"—not real stamps at all. To be "real," a stamp had to be sold at its face value in the post offices of the issuing country. Not so, countered the lovers of the new stamps: a nation had the sovereign power to issue its stamps as it pleased. Traditional stamp collecting is by country, and in the 1970s those who collected by topic had to wade through un-indexed lists of stamps grouped by nation. By the 1980s, the action had moved to topicals, and the postal services of the major nations wanted a piece of that action. Their world was now ready for the heroes and monsters of

popular culture monster stamps.

In 1993 Great Britain made the plunge with a series of five Sherlock Holmes stamps. These proved wildly successful. A year later, Lon Chaney, Sr. became the first horror movie icon to be on a stamp, in the USA's "Stars of the Silent Screen" set. In 1995 British stamps celebrated the science fiction novels of H. G. Wells. Wells, a perennial critic of the British government through the first half of the 20th century, is apparently still unforgotten, for he did not get on the stamps (and still has not been on a British stamp).

1997 saw the centennial of the publication of "Dracula" and "The Invisible Man," the 150th anniversary of the birth of Bram Stoker, the bi-centennial of Mary Shelley's, the 40th anniversary of Hammer's first gothic horror film and the 80th anniversaries of the London and Broadway premieres of the stage version of "Dracula." Celebrations of horror in popular culture included stamps from five countries.

The British stamps commemorating Dracula, Frankenstein, Jekyll & Hyde and the Hound of the Baskervilles were, to put it bluntly, a disaster. Royal Mail decreed that the images not resemble any person, living or dead. The final designs—which look like faces painted on garbage cans—do not; nor do they evoke any reader's or viewer's mental picture of the immortal monsters. So unpopular were the stamps that a rejected design submitted by Spitting Images was circulated "underground" to show what the stamps might have been. "Dracula" stamps from Ireland, birth place of Bram Stoker, fared only slightly better. The images are photographs of a model wearing exaggerated fangs and widow's peak. Canada's horror featured artists' sketches of a vampire, werewolf, ghost and goblin.

A shocking oversight is that British and Irish stamps chose to feature hokey versions of the characters, rather than the authors who created them.

In 1994, Niue Island issued commemorative stamps for the centennial of Robert Louis Stevenson's death. But in his home country, Stevenson like Stoker, Shelley, Wells and Arthur Conan Doyle has yet to appear on a stamp.

Horror fared better in the USA's "Classic Movie Monsters" stamps of the Chaney (as the Phantom of the Opera) and Wolf (Man), Karloff (as Frankenstein's Monster

and The Mummy) and Lugosi as Dracula. They delighted everyone, including the British. The American stamps are almost matched by the Sierra Leone Hollywood Horror Classics. These are on a sheet of 9: Chaney Sr. s Phantom; Chaney Jr. s Wolf Man (with Evelyn Ankers screaming in the lower corner); Lugosi s Dracula; Karloff s Mummy; Frederic March s Mr. Hyde; Charles Laughton as Dr. Moreau; Lionel Atwill in Mystery of the Wax Museum; Vincent Price in The Haunted Palace; and Elsa Lancaster as the Bride of Frankenstein. With the sheet comes a separate sheetlet with Boris Karloff in Son of Frankenstein. On the border of the sheetlet not actually on the stamp itself is Bela Lugosi s Ygor.

The Lugosi-Karloff was continue in the stamp world. By the end of 1997, Karloff had appeared on four stamps (two from the USA, two from Sierra Leone) versus Lugosi s two (one from each country; he gets no credit for being on the border of Sierra Leone s Son of Frankenstein stamp). Lugosi surged to the lead in 1998 with 10 stamps in Chad s Bela Lugosi as Dracula set (again a sheet of 9 and a sheetlet of one). Karloff added one in 2000

as part of the Congo s Great Artists of the 20th Century. Chad included a movie poster of Dracula with Lugosi prominently displayed among its millennium commemorative stamps. Karloff appears in the USA s American Film Making Behind the Scenes, issued in February 2003. Thus, the score now stands at Lugosi 13, Karloff 6.

Meanwhile, Godzilla appeared on a 1998 Guinea stamp; King Kong on a 2003 stamp from Kyrgyzstan, and dinosaurs from The Lost World and Journey to the Center of the Earth on 2002 stamps from Liberia.. Dorian Gray is on Ireland s 2000 commemoratives of Oscar Wilde; Mr. Hyde on Niue Island s 1994 commemoratives of Stevenson, and Frankenstein s monster (an artist s conception, not a movie scene) on millennium stamps from Palau.

Lately science fiction has become a growing theme on stamps. Before Great Britain s Wells stamps of 1995, about the only science fiction issues came in a set from Guinea in 1978, on the 150th anniversary of Jules Verne s death. Since 1995, science fiction has been celebrated on stamps from Israel, San Marino, Antigua & Barbuda, Dominica, and St. Vincent &

The Grenadines.

If any reader wants more detail or some help on where to find some of the stamps described, please feel free to contact me (address below). Likewise, if you know of any stamps that have escaped my notice, please let me know. I know King Kong is on a stamp issued in the 1990s, but have not been able to track it down. ~ ~ ~

(Frank is co-author with Andi Brooks of Vampire Over London — Bela Lugosi in Britain, the untold story of Lugosi s last, forgotten stage tour in Dracula in 1951 and the behind-the-scenes history of Lugosi s three British films: Mystery of the Mary Celeste, Dark Eyes of London, and Mother Riley Meets the Vampire. Frank is also author of a new collection of essays on classic horror films, A Quaint & Curious Volume of Forgotten Lore. Both books are hardcover and well-illustrated and cost \$29.95 plus \$3.00 shipping & handling (in the USA). To place an order or to inquire about international postal rates, contact: Cult Movies Press, 644 E. 7 1/2 St. (as in seven & a half street), Houston, Texas, 77007. Email: lindadelostritto@pdq.net. Both books are limited to 1,000 copies. All copies are signed and numbered.)

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## SPOTLIGHT ON HOLLYWOOD

The monthly grindhouse film festivals taking place at the New Beverly Theatre have been going well. The July double bill of the infamous Italian film *Cannibal Ferox*, and an obscure made-in-Manila film *Raw Force*, which was retitled *King Fu Cannibals* set an all-time attendance record of 200 for a Tuesday night. Special guests included two assistant editors on *Raw Force* who had great stories to tell on first time director Edward Murphy (whose only interest in making the film was to see how many leading ladies he could get to take their clothes off). For more information on upcoming events at this Los Angeles area retro house, call 323-938-4038.

## A Grindhouse Film Festival



The San Diego Comic Convention took place July 17-20th, with an estimated 100,000 attendees. Special guests included Angelie Jolie talking about her *Tomb Raider* sequel, *Cradle of Life*, and Hugh Jackman and Kate Beckinsale in a panel on the upcoming *Van Helsing* film featuring all the famed Universal monsters.

On July 18, I took a trip to the Tijuana Auditorium with some cronies and had first row, ringside seats to see The Flying Mexican Wrestlers; I had a feeling I might wind up dead, as these wrestlers are known to go over the top rope frequently and wipe out any innocent bystanders in the first three rows. Sure enough, we ducked and the unfortunate person behind us got kicked in the head by a masked luchador and went flying out of his seat, lying motionless until some fellow fans revived him by throwing beer in his face. But the real shock of the night was in the main event where we saw El Hijo de Santo get beaten to a pulp by Super Parka and get unmasked! It was reported that El Santo was held back from attacking Super Parka.

Another note of interest. WWE Wrestling Superstar Rob Van Dam has opened up a wrestling memorabilia comic book shop in Long Beach RVD's 5-Star Comics at 131 Lakewood Center Mall in Lakewood, CA. The grand opening took place July 22, with Intercontinental Champion Booker T signing. For more info call 562-531-3553.

The Attack of the 29th Annual Saturn Awards took place on Sunday, May 18th at the Renaissance Hollywood Hotel. Films

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capturing the major awards that night included *Minority Report*, winning best Sci-Fi Film award; *Lord of the Rings - Two Towers* for Best Fantasy Film; and *The Ring* for Best Horror Film.

The definitive director's cut DVD of *I Drink Your Blood* has come out via Grindhouse Releasing. It includes interviews, deleted scenes, trailers, and more. Limited autographed director Dave Durston DVDs are also available.

News about even more newsworthy news will fill my next column next time, in the next new issue of *Cult Movies Magazine*.

Eric Caidin-Hollywood, California

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